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LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I

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Signed by Lawrence F. O'Brien on April 5, 1990.

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ACCESSION NUMBER 92-12

INTERVIEW I

DATE: September 18, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE O'BRIEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. O'Brien's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 5, Side 1

G: Let me ask you first to review some of the episodes at the 1960 [Democratic National] Convention and particularly Lyndon Johnson's selection as vice president.

O: As they headed into the convention, our game plan, to secure the nomination over that two-year period after Kennedy's re-election to the Senate, was based on utilizing primaries selectively. We felt that we had to be awfully concerned about the party pros accepting a Catholic nominee, for obvious reasons. It presented difficulties, too. As it turned out, that was exactly the case. So we attempted to very carefully orchestrate our primary effort and my recollection is that we wound up in seven primaries. We negotiated out of some major primary states--California, Ohio, Pennsylvania--in a variety of ways; we'd stay out if this happened or that happened, and whatever commitments could be made for the future, favorite sons in some instances, like [Michael] DiSalle in Ohio, Pat Brown's activities in California and the rest.

But the effort was to build up within the party a recognition that Kennedy could be a strong candidate for president regardless of the aspect of his religion. And in doing that we really were fortunate because of the seven primary states, three or four of them were rather easy marks for us. Avoiding major states where we required a great deal of money and organization was very helpful. And the primary focus in terms of national attention and party attention really became Wisconsin and West Virginia. The Hubert Humphrey efforts in Wisconsin and West Virginia did elicit a great deal of media attention. And the West Virginia primary, where it was predicted Kennedy would lose but he ultimately won, really was the catalyst that moved us forward.

So then we had to focus our attention on the party pros, whether it was Michigan, Ohio, California, Pennsylvania--the major delegate states that we had some degree of entree to. It was very difficult because, interestingly enough, it wasn't a matter of liking or disliking Kennedy. It was a matter of self-preservation among the pros, and the most difficult people to deal with in the final analysis, as we headed toward Los Angeles, were Catholic pros. David Lawrence was governor of Pennsylvania; Mike DiSalle was governor of Ohio; Dick Daley was the kingpin, of course, in Chicago and, therefore, Illinois. In each instance there was deep concern--Bill Green was a powerhouse in Pennsylvania, also--that the nomination of Kennedy could bring down the ticket in their states, the governorship or a Senate contest or a local contest. So [we had] to persuade them that while they thought Jack was a nice guy and all the rest, the political reality was

that he could be a winner and, consequently, could indeed be a help to them in their individual state efforts to maintain party control.

So, going into Los Angeles, we had continuing question marks. My recollection is that Mayor Daley did not join the Kennedy effort until Los Angeles. David Lawrence and Bill Green still were concerned. Pat Brown was off again, on again. He had an Adlai Stevenson situation in California. We weren't locked in.

But, nevertheless, once we had completed our primary route in those seven states--and that included Maryland, Oregon--we were able to organize quite well in all of them. They were doable in terms of our resources, and we were successful. And in the process, as I said, we had elicited a terrific amount of national attention and, obviously, a great amount of professional Democratic Party people's attention. So we developed a system of checking and rechecking every delegate. Bobby Kennedy and I jointly put together an organization for Los Angeles in which every state delegation was assigned to a Kennedy person, and that Kennedy person, whether it was Abe Ribicoff or John Bailey or whoever--and there were a large number of them then--would literally live with the delegation. That was the contemplation; regardless of whether they were delegates from their own states, they would literally live in the hotel where the delegation was located that they were assigned to monitor.

So each morning for several days prior to the opening of the convention, we would meet at our headquarters in Los Angeles and each of these assigned people would go over, name by name--it was a rather tedious task--the delegates of the state or states in a couple of instances, two or three small states put together, that they were responsible for.

So we got to caucuses--the route that Lyndon Johnson and other candidates were obviously following in Los Angeles--going around to the various caucuses. I remember particularly the California caucus--still trying to lock up those last pieces. But we had a pretty clear idea that we had the nomination. Now, it could be taken away. You could have dissipation of delegate strength, particularly if you had a major party leader that had a change of heart or change of mind. But the objective was to win on the first ballot.

G: Did you feel then that if it didn't go over on the first ballot that you might have some erosion?

O: Yes, we felt that that would create a danger and certainly make it much more difficult. I remember the California caucus, because while you had candidates--we had Scoop [Henry] Jackson, as I recall, Stu Symington, we had a number of them, and we had Lyndon Johnson.

Jack Kennedy and I were returning to our hotel from the California caucus when I told Kennedy in the car that the Johnson delegation had extended an invitation to Kennedy to appear before the Texas delegation. I immediately followed up by saying, "Of course, there's no point to that. First of all, you're not going to gain a darn thing. Secondly, you'll

get into a direct confrontation," because Lyndon Johnson would appear jointly with him and it might cause problems. And I attempted to persuade Kennedy not to do it. I felt that there was no valid point to it. Kennedy thought about it. His first reaction was "yes, I've got a lot of other things to do." But it was a long trip in; I think we were out in Hollywood somewhere at this California caucus--you know the travel problems on the roads in Los Angeles. And the more Kennedy thought about it, the more intrigued he became with it. He then concluded before we got to the hotel that he was going to appear later that afternoon before the Texas delegation. It kind of intrigued him. I therefore had lost the argument. My argument was obviously based on what I thought was political reality, delegate counts.

So he did appear, and from that came the long-remembered comment that Kennedy made that he thought Johnson was certainly the greatest majority leader the Senate had ever had, and he, Kennedy, was going to do everything possible to ensure that he continued as majority leader. And so nothing negative occurred, we gained no delegates, but it achieved a dimension of publicity. The Johnson-John Connally effort to stop Kennedy--which was an obvious effort I would have been making if I were with them--was intense. And our continuing delegate counts showed that we were withstanding that effort.

We then had the unexpected. That was the appearance of Adlai Stevenson and Eleanor Roosevelt at the convention in an attempt to swing the convention with the enthusiasm of the moment. However, the efforts we had expended over that long period of time stood us in good stead because, again, there was no erosion. So when the actual balloting started, we were very confident that we were going to win on the first ballot, and we did. In fact, I think, as I recall it, we were within three votes of our head count when the roll call was completed.

Then, at that moment, after the nomination, Kennedy chose to appear before the convention that night even though he was to formally accept the nomination at that stadium the following day or a couple of days later. But through this entire effort, we had had no serious contemplation of a running mate.

G: You'd never talked to Kennedy about that before?

O: Oh, you know, there were a lot of names out there and I guess we probably talked at one time or another about eight or ten possibilities. So I think the enthusiasm of the moment, the culmination of a couple of years of effort, the fact that we had achieved the nomination was so overwhelming to all of us that we just didn't focus. So after that long night, we all went to bed in the early hours of the morning, I received a call from Kennedy early--it probably was 6:00 a.m. or something like that--to immediately join him in his suite. So I hastily dressed and went down to the suite, and there were several people there, of course, Bobby, Ken O'Donnell, and now I don't recall the others. And I don't recall specifically how this had taken place over a matter of very few hours, but Jack Kennedy had made a decision that he'd like to have Lyndon Johnson as his running mate.

I don't know what came first in terms of whose great thought it was. There were those that later claimed it was their thought; Joe Alsop claimed that and Phil Graham claimed that. But I think in the normal course of events, Jack Kennedy came up with this idea, because I think perhaps he was probably the first to focus on "Are you going to be a footnote in history as a nominee for the presidency or are you indeed going to achieve election?" And you had the South and the Southwest; you had this whole problem of bringing a high degree of unity in terms of the ticket to this campaign effort, and it was a stroke of genius. I can't lay any claim to participating in it in terms of it being a stroke of genius.

G: When Kennedy mentioned this, were these the elements that he cited?

O: Basically, he felt that it would achieve great balance on the ticket and that now we had just come off within hours of, not a bitter struggle, but certainly a vigorous struggle with Lyndon Johnson, who was our prime opposition as we got to the close-out of the nominating process.

G: So you're convinced that the offer was not intended as one that Johnson would decline?

O: Oh, no, we were not at all sure he'd accept. No. In fact, it caused turmoil, off-again, on-again activity over a period of a couple of hours. Johnson was in his suite, as I recall--it was just below Kennedy's--and Sam Rayburn was there and others. It was a matter of some time elapsing and I believe that there was, during that period, [the feeling that] no, he won't accept. Sam Rayburn was absolutely adamant that he not accept; a quote attributed to him is "I'll shoot you, Lyndon, if you take this," something to that effect. He felt very strongly about it.

G: Let me ask you to go back to that suite, the Kennedy suite, and the initial meeting when the proposition of asking LBJ to serve as the nominee of vice president. What was your reaction to it?

O: I was stunned. Because I guess whatever little thought I ever gave to the second place on the ticket, I don't think I ever focused at all on having your major opposition wind up your running mate. Now, obviously, that's something that's happened many times in American political history, but somehow or other if I ever really gave more than a fleeting thought to Lyndon Johnson, it would be in the context, "Heck, Lyndon Johnson would not accept second spot. He's the majority leader of the Senate. He isn't going to sacrifice what he has to be on this ticket." So I never gave it any serious thought myself. Maybe I was thinking of Stu Symington or whoever.

G: Was Symington your own personal choice?

O: I didn't have one. There were half a dozen people that obviously would be the people on a list that you would ultimately select from. None of them were stick-outs in the sense that,

boy, this has got to be it. But see, Lyndon Johnson was another dimension. He wasn't one of these fellows that really never had a chance to be nominated but had gone through some of the exercise and, consequently, had reasonably high national visibility and therefore could be on the ticket. Now this was entirely different. Of course, part of the problem was that some of our most ardent supporters in acquiring the nomination would be nothing short of appalled with a decision of this nature, in the event Lyndon Johnson accepted. That wasn't a happy task that Jack assigned his brother, Bob, who was to go up and visit with Governor G. Mennen Williams and Walter Reuther, and advise them of the decision.

G: Was this at that early meeting that he asked his brother to--?

O: Once it was determined that Lyndon Johnson would accept the nomination, there were a couple of assignments. I remember, because immediately as part of that you had to think about your own supporters and what their reaction would be, and I guess you would direct your thought process immediately to Michigan, to G. Mennen Williams and to Walter Reuther. They were very liberal. They were certainly in leadership roles in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Reuther as the head of the UAW obviously was a very prominent and important force in the activity that brought about the nomination. Bobby was charged with that duty, and Bobby was not at all enchanted with the selection of Lyndon Johnson.

G: What was his reaction?

O: As mine, I think he was shocked, probably for different reasons. I'm going back twenty-five years, but I would react in terms of trying to put the numbers together right away rather than any of the philosophical views or the rest. But there had been some fairly bitter moments in the process. As for Bobby Kennedy, it was his nature to strongly react pro and con to most things. I think that he perceived attacks on his brother Jack as highly personal as far as he was concerned.

G: So he felt this should eliminate Johnson?

O: Yes. So Bobby first had to accustom himself to this, and then take on the job of smoothing some of what would be obviously ruffled feathers.

G: How did the discussion go between the two Kennedy brothers, can you recall?

O: Some of that discussion was just between the two of them.

G: Really?

O: Yes.

G: By the time you came, was this still being debated?

O: No, this was off and on, but Jack would go in the other room, Bob might go in another. You know, this was one of these totally unstructured situations. Everybody, I think, was in somewhat of a daze. The whole thing was unfolding, and as the minutes went on, will he or wouldn't he if he was offered? And then he's offered, would he take it? No, he won't, and then the word would come back, well, no, he's not going to take it, and then, well, he'll think about it some more. This sort of thing just went on and on. The key to it all was that Jack Kennedy had made up his mind this was absolutely the right thing to do, and there were no alternatives.

During the course of this activity, you got to the stage where Lyndon Johnson agreed to take it. Before this would ever become public knowledge--it was still confined to this room and Lyndon Johnson's suite--it was necessary to round up all of the potential vice presidential nominees one by one and have them come in and meet privately with Jack Kennedy, where Jack Kennedy would tell them individually that he had made his decision. Part of that brought Scoop Jackson to becoming national chairman during the campaign.

It was just an unbelievable experience in every respect. It absolutely shook all of us, because to my knowledge, I don't know who might have whispered in Jack's ear or something like that. I certainly didn't. I know my mind was wide open. When I got that call that morning, obviously I knew the subject. The subject was now let's go over the list and let's get a consensus among the half-dozen of us that were intimately involved with Jack and the campaign and let's put this to bed, because we're going to have a session of the convention starting at noon and we've got to resolve this. I didn't go into his suite with any thought in my mind about Lyndon Johnson, not only that he'd be on the list, [but] there would be no list. It would be Lyndon Johnson. I did not know Lyndon Johnson intimately at all. Perhaps I had met him once or twice.

But, anyway, people fanned out and there were tasks to do. You had to decide who was going to place him in nomination, who was going to second the nomination. Then the report back from the Michigan delegation was that they were totally displeased, and then there was the threat that this would be a floor fight. So that required all kinds of posturing on the convention floor and all kinds of assurances that we had everybody in place and that the motion to close the nominations and the motion to declare the election of Lyndon Johnson be made from the floor. I forget now, but Abe Ribicoff was a party to it in the Connecticut delegation. There was someone else; in case the chair didn't recognize one, they'd recognize the other. John McCormack was up on the platform with Rayburn. So all of this was part of what had to be done before the afternoon. At a point when things settled down in the suite, people moved out to carry on their tasks, including Bobby going up to whatever hotel it was to meet with Walter Reuther and the Governor.

G: Soapy Williams?

O: Soapy Williams. There were other assignments. You knew what your soft spots were. You knew there was going to be some strong adverse reaction.

Then Lyndon Johnson came into the suite. And I remember that because Jack Kennedy took a call or went off into another room for a while, so that left Lyndon Johnson and me alone. At which point Johnson said to me just what I have stated, "You and I don't know each other well at all. I know of you and obviously you know of me. But I want to tell you something. In making this commitment, I am going to do everything humanly possible to help this man and to help this ticket. I am going to do *everything* physically and mentally that I'm capable of doing in the interests of this campaign and this ticket. And I want you and whoever else that handles this campaign to tell me what I should be doing, assign tasks to me. I don't care how difficult the task might be. Move me everywhere and anywhere you can. I am totally committed, and you're going to find that I am everything that you would want me to be in terms of being a running mate." It was a very impressive monologue. I was impressed. I started even then adjusting. I don't know as it had fully penetrated with me that, by gosh, this was a coup and this was something that was going to really have an impact on this election.

But anyway, that's what took place, and I must say, throughout the campaign, Lyndon Johnson did everything he had committed to do.

G: Who were the other people considered for the vice presidential nomination?

O: No one had been, as I said, contacted even indirectly regarding it, and we had not had any kind of a formalization of discussion regarding it. But as I recall it, and I'll miss some names, but Symington sticks out, Scoop Jackson sticks out, Orville Freeman was another fellow on that list, also Humphrey. And it seems to me there were a couple more who elude me at the moment. When I say half a dozen, I think there were half a dozen names that were bandied about by the press as potential VP candidates.

G: Were there any other southerners considered?

O: I don't know of any. It's probably somewhat remote, but only because of his position and his early advocacy of Kennedy that the name of Terry Sanford might have come up.

G: That's who I was wondering about.

O: Yes.

G: What in particular did you hope Johnson would add to the ticket's electability?

O: I think first of all it gave what we like to term geographical balance. He was nationally prominent and he was from Texas; Kennedy was the nominee and he was from Massachusetts. Johnson, as majority leader and for other reasons obviously, had entree to the South and the Southwest. He was eminently acceptable on the ticket, and more than that, with some degree of enthusiasm on the part of any number of southerners. As for Kennedy, his strength was in the West, the industrial Midwest, and the East. And it

seemed that they complimented each other in that sense, in terms of a campaign. There was no great disagreement between them regarding the issues and their views on where they might tend or hoped to go once they achieved election.

G: Did you ever do a state-by-state breakdown of what numerically Johnson could add to the election?

O: No. All of that might have been something we kicked around after the fact, but I can tell you that I don't think, even though I'm trying to reflect on it after twenty-five years, my reflections today would alter in any meaningful sense what actually occurred. It was out of the blue; there was an initial disbelief, there was concern on the part of Bobby about our supporters and their reactions. And then there was the problem of making sure that you kept a pleasant relationship with all the candidates or potential VP nominees. All of that was swirling around the suite. And you had a time frame. You had to try to smooth the ruffled feathers of a number of liberals in the Democratic Party that had supported Kennedy. You didn't have that kind of problem with a Dick Daley or a Dave Lawrence, or those people; they were political pros and it wouldn't take more than a few minutes for any of them to say, "Well, this sounds good."

G: Was there anybody that served as a go-between between the Johnson forces and the Kennedy forces? You know, Jim Rowe and Phil Graham have been mentioned as people who shuttled back and forth.

O: No, I don't think so. I think it was a relatively easy matter. There were people, I don't know how many people were around Johnson at that point, but I don't think the structuring of it in any sense ever occurred. In other words, "All right, you speak to so-and-so," or "You do this and you do that, and then you have him speak to Johnson or to Rayburn. "This just. . . . If you had had two days to plan this coup, I'm sure you would have had it well orchestrated and well organized, and everybody would know what everyone else was doing. But we, who had some reputation, at that hour at least, of being fairly good organizers and all the rest, found ourselves without a game plan other than "let's get him," which was Jack Kennedy's game plan.

G: Jack Kennedy did go down to the Johnson suite that morning and talk with him.

O: Yes. Yes.

G: It's unclear exactly what was said, but apparently there was no outright, formal offer at that point, is that correct?

O: It was a feeler, yes.

G: It was a feeler. Okay.

O: Yes. Because, you see, he had to wrestle, too, with if you placed it in a formal context

and it was turned down, that could be adverse to this campaign. So how do you get to putting the thought across, avoiding the formalization, and yet getting the temperature?

G: Did Kennedy come back from that meeting with the notion that Johnson would accept it?

O: That he would be thinking about it. But Sam Rayburn got into that picture at some stage, and Rayburn was doing everything he could on the basis of their lifelong friendship to dissuade him.

G: Now, Kennedy did talk to Rayburn at this point, didn't he?

O: Yes.

G: Do you recall the circumstances of that?

O: No. There was just a lot of movement up and down the stairway.

G: Then Robert Kennedy went and talked with the Johnson people--Johnson, Rayburn, Connally, and the like--and told him of the opposition to LBJ, particularly in the Michigan delegation, and suggested maybe that he consider the chairmanship of the DNC as an alternative to VP. Do you remember that?

O: No.

G: Do you have any--?

O: No. No. And I can say this, in the group meeting with Kennedy present, there was never a reference to that.

G: Really?

O: No. Not in my recollection. Because I know, twenty-five years later, what my reaction would have been to that. I would have thought that was ridiculous, to put it mildly. I think it would have bordered on the insulting rather than getting the objective accomplished.

G: Well, why would Robert Kennedy have done this?

O: Robert Kennedy was not enamored with the whole concept. He had a responsibility to fulfill his brother's direction, and Bob was good at that, and as the years went on, Jack Kennedy never at any fleeting moment was other than president of the United States. His brother was the attorney general and his brother was his confidant and adviser, but the decision maker sat in the Oval Office and the decision maker sat in the suite that day. It took some doing, and obviously Bobby wasn't saying "I'm going to fight my brother" or anything, but it took some doing, first of all, to have Bobby get to the point of the

accommodation, and then to carry out his responsibilities as a spokesman for his brother with Johnson, Rayburn, as well as Williams and Reuther and the rest. And I don't confine it to Williams and Reuther; there were others that were aroused, and there was the threat.

I don't want to overemphasize the threat of a floor fight, but I must say when you're engaged in something like that you don't just overlook any possibility of difficulty arising, and the threat was made. We didn't contemplate that somehow or other they could defeat Johnson on the floor, but, obviously, we were contemplating how to avoid this. So before the Michigan delegation got into the act and there was a roll call, you had to plan something, because you didn't want to walk out into that convention with that kind of controversy if you could avoid it.

G: It would have been an embarrassment.

O: Of course. So, you see, this was not a simple matter. I'm talking about 6:00 or 6:30 a.m., or whatever it was, to noontime, when all of these things occurred--the fanning-out process around the city.

G: Did Jack Kennedy ever seem to waver on Johnson during the course of this?

O: Not to my recollection.

G: This has been one possible explanation.

O: Waver on Johnson?

G: On his choice of Johnson as the nominee.

O: I don't recall it. If that occurred, I didn't perceive it.

G: All right. Now let me ask you to describe the anti-Kennedy propaganda that seemed to come from the Johnson forces. Was this, do you think, the genesis of the friction between some of the Kennedy people and the Johnson people?

O: I suppose so. As it got to D-day, hour by hour the effort on the part of the Johnson people seemed to us to become more intense, more personalized. There were all kinds of rumors around and circulation of stories about Kennedy's health and that sort of thing.

G: How could you trace these to the Johnson people?

O: Well, we really tabbed John Connally and a lady whose name eludes me.

G: Oh, India Edwards, yes.

O: Yes. Whether rightly or wrongly, we felt that was the source and that Connally was a

good bare-knuckle fighter and this was desperation. It was a little bit like it happened by sheer coincidence that I was being interviewed by Mike Wallace up in the booth at the time of the Adlai Stevenson demonstration. And Mike Wallace, in his inimitable style, started in saying, "Well, look at this! Look at this, I'm looking out the window of the booth. The aisles are jammed and the enthusiasm is great. You people have felt you had this set and now look at this. This could turn out to be a debacle for you." My only comment was, "Mike, why don't you look at the floor? The delegates are all in their seats. The people in the aisles, the demonstrators with the balloons and the horns and everything, all came from the balconies." And that was really what was happening and it meant little or nothing. But, of course, if you're a reporter, you're hoping that something like that will occur so it's a much better story.

But on the Johnson side it didn't take that form at all. It was the difficult, difficult situation that you have when it's clear that your opponent has "pledges," quote, unquote, that indicate he's going to win that nomination and on the first ballot. How do you try to peel off some of that support? How do you try to disrupt this bandwagon? And that's really the position Johnson was in. You resort to whatever comes to your mind, I guess. I don't recall that I reacted to the attacks the Johnson people were making or the effort they were expending in a very, shall I say, personalized manner. I think that I had enough years behind me in politics to kind of ride with that.

But there were those among us in this little handful of people who had not had that background. And, of course, you had Bobby, who was reacting much more strongly than I was because it was his brother they were attacking.

G: Had he had a dislike for Johnson before this point, do you think?

O: I don't recall. I don't think there was anything like a relationship or contact between the two of them that would have brought about any. . . .

G: Okay. The health accusations are well known. What else did Johnson's forces promote, do you recall? Was there any anti-Catholic propaganda?

O: I don't really recall any. I think that what happened with the Johnson forces, as Lyndon Johnson years later told me when we discussed a lot of this in a different context, was that he had a team out there dealing with delegates. He wasn't in primaries, but he had them fanned out across the country during that same period. These fellows would meet back in Washington and report on their findings and delegate count and Johnson felt his people had failed him because they had given him all kinds of reports over those months that gave him a true belief that he had a good shot at the nomination. I don't recall now, but I remember Johnson and I discussing specific states in conversations over the intervening years.

G: North Carolina, Arizona. . . .

- O: Yes. And he said, "I got counts from my people, and then, my God, it was just the other way around!" He told me on a number of occasions that he thought truly that he had a good organization in the field with accomplished pros, and that their organized effort in the delegate hunt was productive, and their reports to him, which he insisted upon--I'm sure he did--being specific, were very encouraging. And he was truly taken aback to find there was so much air in all of this and that we somehow or other--this is [in] nonprimary states--had due to our efforts, as he pointed out, clandestinely really made an impact state by state on these elected delegates. He insisted that there were times when he had X number of delegates in certain states and somehow or other we were able to shake them loose. I don't know if he was giving us too much credit; I think he probably never had them.
- G: Anything else vis-a-vis Johnson at the convention?
- O: No. I think that he exhibited a little concern in that suite in the conversation about the upcoming session to nominate the VP. He was obviously totally aware of the disenchantment of some of those Kennedy supporters, the opposition indeed of a number of prominent Kennedy supporters. He exhibited to me, in the conversation, a confidence that we'd get that resolved, but it was clear, too, that he was concerned that having made this commitment it could turn out to be a debacle, and that would be not only devastating to us but to him, too. He did exhibit that. But I must say in the context of that discussion, he also went on to talk about what his role would be.

Tape 1 of 5, Side 2

- G: At the point that Johnson agreed to go on the ticket with Kennedy, did he have any requirements with regard to patronage or responsibilities as vice president? Did he want any conditions?
- O: Not that I'm aware of. None. I think that what transpired was that the assignments given Johnson, which he readily accepted throughout the campaign, were the rather traditional assignments of a VP candidate. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the train through the South and all of this sort of thing, but also a great deal of emphasis on the travel in the Midwest, in states like Indiana is a good example, where the nominee has the big street parades and all the rest. The VP candidate gets in there and speaks to smaller groups and hits a lot of the smaller communities that the candidate doesn't, this type of thing. Johnson, as I recall it, never had a complaint to make of any kind, and acquitted himself admirably.

And at no time, and this went on beyond when I really got to know the man in the White House and the rest, was his loyalty to Kennedy questioned by me. I resented some of the writings of later years, indeed by some of my colleagues, that indicated that the relationship between Kennedy and Johnson was not of the level that some people might have thought, and that Kennedy contemplated dropping him from the ticket at the time of re-election. Never a word such as that was ever uttered in my presence. Never.

G: Anything to the contrary that might--

O: To the contrary, I cite one incident, as it never left my mind. I don't recall the circumstances of the meeting that was to take place, but we, by that I mean the special assistants--that would be Ken O'Donnell, [Theodore] Sorensen, and me, but probably more Ken O'Donnell than me--were involved. The instructions were that any meeting of a substantive nature that we were going to have in the White House, and that would involve, obviously, contemplation of messages to Congress or other decisions, automatically the Vice President was to be invited. If he was out of the country or something, perhaps it would be well to reschedule the meetings so he could be present. An occasion arose and we were in the Cabinet Room, and there were a number of us sitting there, and it had to do with some kind of domestic message. As I say, I don't remember the specifics, but I do remember the President sitting down. We just barely got started, and it hit him, and he said, "Where is the Vice President?" Everybody just looked at him. And it turned out we had neglected to notify the Vice President. Kennedy expressed his views in the strongest terms.

G: What did he say?

O: Well, he said in substance, "Don't let this ever happen again. You know what my rules are, and we will not conduct meetings without the Vice President being present. I want his input, and I don't want this ever to happen again, and I want to be darn sure that it doesn't." He couldn't have been stronger. That incident really, I think, exemplified the professional relationship between the two men. Now, I'm not suggesting that Johnson and Kennedy became social buddies any more than I was a social buddy of Jack Kennedy's. But in a professional sense, Jack Kennedy was extremely appreciative of Johnson's support, which was evidenced in every way. I had a relationship of fourteen years with Jack Kennedy; I wasn't at social events with him. We had a friendship of fourteen years, but my relationship with him was not one of an intimate buddy from college days or what have you. So in the Johnson relationship--they were two entirely different types of fellows; they accommodated each other. I'm not saying it was love and affection for Johnson, although I never heard Kennedy say a bad word about Lyndon Johnson in all of those years. But, certainly, as president he wanted to ensure that the role of the Vice President was as meaningful a role as could be provided and that he wanted the Vice President at his right hand.

G: How would you assess LBJ's relationship with Bob Kennedy during this period, not the later period, but during this transitional [period]?

O: I don't recall anything untoward in the early stages. I was involved between those two men at a later stage, but I don't recall anything in those early days.

G: Writers have suggested a bad chemistry between the two. Was this at all evident at the time?

- O: Not at that time.
- G: Do you think that after the convention, when both the Johnson forces and the Kennedy forces were working on the general election, was there sort of a good feeling between the two camps, or how would you describe the working [relationship]?
- O: Yes, because I was responsible for the organization. I was national director of the campaign. Bobby Kennedy was the campaign manager. But as far as staff melding and all the rest of this, I have no recollection of anything other than upbeat. Following the selection of the vice presidential candidate, you selected the Democratic national chairman the day following the formal convention. We then met with all of our Kennedy leaders across the country before we left Los Angeles. We had schedules and material already prepared. We had an intensive briefing session with them. We then set up a series of regional meetings across the country to get to the grassroots, or as close as we could, of the party organization and the Kennedy activists across the country, in an organizational context. We toured the country, and we had eight or nine organizational meetings in a period of I think probably seven to ten days. We just flew across the country and met in all the major areas and brought in everybody we could from the surrounding areas or in some instances three or four surrounding states. We had representatives of all the elements of the campaign, the women's division and the Citizens [for Kennedy], Whizzer [Byron] White and people like that. There was a team and I'd conduct the meetings. We made every effort to put in place what really had been our organizational effort in Massachusetts when Kennedy defeated [Henry Cabot] Lodge all the way back in 1952. It was a basic fundamental manual we followed that maximized the potential. So off we went. The candidate went his way and we went ours, which is the way it should be.
- G: One final question on the convention itself. In your own mind, did you ever come up with a reason why Johnson agreed to step down as majority leader to accept the vice presidential [nomination]?
- O: No, I didn't. I think there was one probable misjudgment that Johnson made, and that was if he were no longer majority leader but vice president of the United States it would [not] significantly change his position and role in the Senate among his colleagues. That took place in the early stages of the Congress. Although I don't recall the details, apparently Lyndon Johnson made some effort to retain a formalized leadership position even as vice president, and he was advised, which I think he probably should have anticipated, that he was no longer a member of the club. It wasn't personal, but you're no longer a member of the club, my friend. And I think that bothered him because, and we'll get into it later, there were times when he made comments to me that indicated he was bothered by that.

We then went on through the campaign and there was one element of surprise at Hyannis Port on election night, and that was the closeness of the election. I remember while flying to Hyannis election day recalling the Harris and Gallup polls and the others that showed Kennedy a winner a week before the election, which was comforting. They

then started to close over that weekend, and they were quite close as of election morning. I was somewhat disbelieving. But as the night unfolded, it turned out, as we know, to be a very, very close election. It was a long night.

As a matter of fact, when it was decided that we would go to the national guard armory in Hyannis and claim victory with all the Kennedy family and entourage, I went with the group, but I was still just a little uneasy. I didn't like the way this was turning out--the closeness of it. So I went into a side office while all of this excitement was unfolding and called Chicago. I didn't locate the Mayor, but I did talk to an election official or somebody who was in a position of authority, and my simple question was, "Has the count been completed in Illinois?" He said that it had just been completed downstate. While Daley had been accused of thievery over the years, we were fully aware of the games played by the Republicans downstate, so they tried to get the downstate vote in before the final count in Cook County. He said there were approximately 25,000 votes for Kennedy which as yet had not been officially recorded, and downstate was already complete. So we had squeezed out Illinois.

I came out of the office and Ted White was standing there. Ted was a perceptive fellow, and he had gone through the entire campaign with us. He said, "I bet I know who you were talking to." And I said, "Who was I talking to?" He said, "You were talking to Dick Daley." I said, "No, I wasn't," which was a truthful answer, and I walked away from him. But that was an indication of my concern.

G: The story goes that in later years Jack Kennedy at troublesome times would say he was going to demand a recount in Illinois.

O: (Laughter)

G: Do you think that Daley threw in some extra votes?

O: No. Because we had the reverse of that, a very close margin, with Humphrey, when I ran the Humphrey campaign [in 1968], which went in the wrong direction. No, there was a degree of hanky-panky somewhere in Illinois, but I always felt that whatever it was--and I had no knowledge of it and if it indeed existed--it appeared to be in the southern part of the state, because they were very adept at that sort of thing. No, it was just a darn close race. You could look across the results and Illinois didn't stick out in any sense. You lost a couple here and there by small margins, you won a couple by small margins--more than a couple, it was a very, very close election.

G: Texas was relatively close, too.

O: Yes.

G: Do you recall any of the problems there?

O: No, that was Johnson's territory. We went through the whole campaign thinking that "Lyndon is going to carry Texas for us, just don't dwell on it. It's in his hands and we're confident," but it was close. The whole election, actually, when you think about it, was extremely close; closer than we had anticipated. We eked it out, that's about what it amounted to. And the fact of the matter is we lost twenty-one seats in the House in that election.

G: Did you play any role in Kennedy's speech to the Baptist ministers in Houston?

O: I was with him. Contrary to what was the prevailing view after the speech and I guess historically is the view, I never accepted the feeling that he had turned something around.

G: Really?

O: No. I was with him, and I remember being in the elevator with him and going to the hall. You could always depend upon Kennedy to acquit himself well. I saw so many occasions over those fourteen years of association that I certainly didn't have any feeling that it was going to be otherwise. Obviously, the Houston ministers conference was going to treat him cordially. There wasn't going to be any conflict. He'd make his presentation and leave. But I never accepted that it impacted on the election.

I think that what happened on the religious issue is underscored by the West Virginia primary. Lou Harris was our pollster. That was prior to Lou Harris becoming a national pollster. And I remember he'd have a pad just like that one, and he'd do his polling, and we'd sit in the lobby of that Kanawha Hotel down there, and he'd go over his numbers and I would tell him about certain arrangements that had been made, to be slated with county slates I thought would be helpful, and we might adjust the numbers a little bit in that regard. But the fact of the matter was that the Sunday before the West Virginia primary we were rained out on a tour; it called for a plane tour and we were grounded. So Kennedy and I were sitting in the hotel and we were depressed. The conversation went along these lines: "Well, if we come within two or four percentage points of Hubert, maybe we can claim some sort of a moral victory, because everybody's predicting we're going to lose and the polls indicate we're going to lose." That was really our view, and the scope of the victory was very surprising to us.

G: Well, isn't it correct that you got a lot of sheriffs behind you and other county [officials]?

O: Well, we got the organization, because it is an organization state--but you have to remember that was their first presidential primary. There was no interest on the part of the pros. The last item on that ballot as far as they were concerned was the presidential primary. No interest. I remember talking to the clerk of courts in a county trying to get slated on the slate they'd have printed to pass out to the voters. I regretted what I said to him, because I suggested that a) I was confident that Kennedy would be the next president of the United States; b) I wanted him to understand that we would never forget him, that the White House door would be open to him. And he said to me, "O'Brien, stop there. I

can work this out. He seems to be a nice guy and I don't mind him being on the slate. But I couldn't care less about the White House door. I don't know if there's more than a handful of people in this whole state [who've] ever been in the White House. But," he said, "I want to have you understand I'm not interested in the White House; I'm solely interested in the courthouse," and that was the story of West Virginia.

But we worked hard at it and it was helpful to tie in to some of the county organizations around the state. But the fact of the matter was that later that Sunday afternoon, reporters had gone off on tours of their own during the day, and some of them had visited churches. Almost invariably the preacher or minister in his sermon spoke about the primary. And I guess, at least from what they detected, it was in the context of "let's not be what people think we are. We resent it." There was a distinct statewide reaction to this repeated media suggestion that because Kennedy was a Catholic he couldn't carry the state. Something had to happen in those twenty-four or forty-eight hours. Now, Kennedy had the debate, maybe there was a delayed reaction from the Kennedy-Humphrey debate, because Kennedy had acquitted himself extremely well in the debate. Kennedy had gone on television that Sunday. No script, just went on for the half-hour, and he talked about his heritage and his religion and his contemplation of the future and his country. You know, Kennedy was an excellent communicator.

So all of those things, you see, probably went into the mix when Tuesday came. But there was great pride across West Virginia, interestingly enough, in Kennedy winning that primary, because they felt that an unfair weight had been put on them. I really believe to this day something had to happen to change the Lou Harris poll that showed us losing by six or eight percentage points, and we were hopeful that we might reduce the two to four, and we won strongly.

- G: Critics have argued that the victory was a result of Joe Kennedy having pumped a lot of money into the effort.
- O: I'll tell you, any money that was pumped into West Virginia I had knowledge of and made decisions concerning. And I'll tell you, the entire expenditure in West Virginia in that primary wouldn't have financed a Congressional election in Massachusetts.
- G: Did you feel that you had adequate financing in that primary?
- O: Yes, because it really was Kennedy at the mine shafts, Kennedy on the street corners, Kennedy with FDR [Jr.] traveling around. And what we found was that all over West Virginia you'd go into these homes, go into stores, and there was a picture of Roosevelt. That made an impact. No question that we tried to organize West Virginia, as we tried to organize anything we were ever engaged in. And we had Bob McDonough, that was the local Kennedy director, and he was very good, very dedicated, and did an excellent job. And there were any number of West Virginia folks with Bob that formed the campaign effort there. We had an extremely well organized campaign, because as I said early on, we're dealing with seven primaries in relatively small states. If you take New Hampshire

and a couple of others that were walk-through primaries, or Maryland, we really had Oregon, Wisconsin, West Virginia. And West Virginia became pre-eminent off the results of the Wisconsin primary that preceded it. We had won Wisconsin, but the press across the country said that it was a moral victory for Hubert Humphrey because we hadn't come up to the press' predictions. We came very close to our own but not to the press' predictions. Bobby Kennedy and I had to hustle the next morning to West Virginia on the "Caroline" and meet with McDonough, and we traveled to four or five locations to reassure our own troops in West Virginia that indeed we had won the Wisconsin primary, and they were not to believe the media claims.

I came out of West Virginia with great admiration for those people. Also, I think I learned a lot. I know Jack Kennedy learned a lot and he never forgot it.

G: Well, the story goes that it was that experience that really made him aware of the poverty in this country.

O: That's right. And you have to realize the breakthrough, and this was this man's breakthrough. Sure, there was an organization; there was O'Brien doing his thing or whatever. But the fact of the matter is that to see this man waiting in a mine shaft for those miners to come up all blackened and stick out his hand and say, "I'd like to meet you," and then visit with them. He had to break through. He had to break through. This didn't happen easily, but he did break through. They did accept, but not at the outset. It was a difficult task.

G: Remarkable. Did you play a role in the television debates?

O: Yes.

G: What was your [role]?

O: Well, the role was really in trying to take advantage of an opportunity in terms of early acceptance. Our absolute conviction, certainly mine, [was] that if we could get to those debates, Nixon would live to regret it. The total understanding we had [was] that Nixon felt completely otherwise, as evidenced by the failure of Nixon to go back and take a look at the Lodge-Kennedy debate in Massachusetts, and to take a look at the Humphrey-Kennedy debate in West Virginia. Nixon was very self-assured.

The debates were something that we wished for and anticipated from the day the agreement was formalized. I was with him at all four debates. Jack Kennedy was a remarkable fellow and I had great admiration for him or I wouldn't have gone through all I did with him on these things. I never had a moment's discomfort when it came to Kennedy going one-on-one under any set of circumstances. He had a lot of guts. He was an extremely courageous guy. Really, it was just like with the Texas delegation; he couldn't resist it. Even if it might have hurt, he just couldn't resist it. He couldn't resist going to the Houston ministers conference. That sort of thing got his adrenalin flowing, and I think

that without question, particularly in retrospect on the closeness of the election, those debates, or that debate really, the first one, had a tremendous impact. I had occasion to recall it recently. Some reporter called me. Apparently it's the twenty-fifth anniversary of the debate coming up in the next few days. And I remember it vividly. There wasn't that much planning. There were position papers and Jack took whatever opportunities he could between stops to brief himself. You know, you're pretty limited on how deeply you can get into it. But there was the regular briefing procedure with Ted Sorensen and others providing material.

But that debate was not a substantive debate, nor did you contemplate it would be. You don't know what's going to happen. But the question is, what is the mass audience perception going to be? And when we gathered in Chicago for that debate, in that holding room Kennedy had already taken a look at the studio, just as Nixon had. Kennedy had suggested it was too cold in the studio and insisted they turn up the heat a little bit. As we sat in the holding room, I remember there were some sandwiches and tea, and Kennedy did pour a cup of tea for himself. Nobody else touched anything, Joe Kennedy, Ken O'Donnell--there were about five or six of us, including Ted Sorensen, I guess. I was a wreck.

G: Were the Nixon people in the same area?

O: No, they were on the other side of the studio. Time starts to run; now you're just checking your watch. And there were ten minutes or so to go, or probably between fifteen and ten minutes to air time. There was no outward indication at least of any Kennedy concern. He was very self-composed. But there wasn't a normal conversation taking place, and I really couldn't stand it, so I walked out of the room and strolled down the hall. Down the hall a short distance, I realized that was the door to the studio, so I opened the door, walked in, closed the door and stood there. There were a number of staff people, camera crews and all that, finalizing everything, checking the lights, et cetera. And I looked across this very large studio and noted a fellow pacing up and down alone, and it was Nixon. As I watched him, at one point he went over and checked the podium, where his position would be, and he went back. And even with my rather poor eyesight I could see that this man was heavily made up. He just didn't quite look like Nixon in a way. But clearly I was observing a fellow that was terribly uptight.

Then the countdown over the loudspeaker began, and I am still standing there. Nixon hasn't left the studio. And the countdown came and I don't recall the exact minutes, but four minutes to air time there's no Kennedy. Three minutes to air time, there's no Kennedy. At which point I'm semi-hysterical standing there, and I'm just about to say, "God, didn't you hear the--?" And at perhaps two minutes to air time the door opened, Kennedy walked in, moved directly to the podium and stood. Nixon, looking ill at ease, took his position, attempted to speak to Kennedy--Kennedy nodded. And they were on the air.

After that debate, I visited the press room. There were hundreds of press present,

many of whom I knew, and I asked, "What do you think?" While they were relatively noncommittal, it was clear to me that the prevailing attitude was Kennedy had done a great job. He had won that debate; to what degree might vary from writer to writer.

Then I went over to the hotel lobby, which was jammed with all the Daley pros, Dick Daley's organization, and I started to chat with some of them. Then it hit me, and I started to say, "What do you think the two major issues were?" Nobody had the faintest idea. There was fleeting reference to Quemoy and Matsu, but nobody there had any real idea of the debating points.

The next day, it was the first stop in Indiana--Evansville--and the crowd at the airport was two to three times what we had experienced at earlier stops. In a few hours that debate had made a major impact. I was at all four debates with Jack, and all he had to do was just play out the other three.

There's no question that first debate had a real impact. Now, there are those that say, "If you just read the transcript." And others will say, "Well, if you'd listened to it on radio you would have concluded it either was a draw or Nixon won." The fact is that it was the first, it placed every candidate from then on in a tough position on debates, to this day. Debates now take place at every level of politics all over America. People even started to debate empty chairs.

The Jack Kennedy I knew and saw in action was a remarkable fellow when it came to a crisis. He came up to it. Typical of him was his handling of the Bay of Pigs. It was a disaster, and he, figuratively, went out on the White House steps and said to the American people, "My fellow Americans, I goofed. I have absolutely blown this. I let you down. All I can say to you is I hope I've learned a lesson. I pledge to do better in the future." My God, the polls showed his ratings went up off disaster, not down! So that really was the type of courageous man you were dealing with.

While we had attempted at all times to be as organized as we could be in the political context, in the elections in Massachusetts, in the nomination quest and the election, we now focused on the future in specific terms, programmatically. I remember very well being with him at Palm Beach. He put together his cabinet. Each cabinet member selected then met with me, generally over dinner in my suite at the Mayflower Hotel, to review his role as a member of the team. I made it very clear that the President--

G: What does this encompass, can you--?

O: Everything they would be engaged in would focus on the President. The President's programs--i.e., legislative programs--would be a responsibility shared by every cabinet member. Each cabinet member would be in communication with us on the selection of all his top people in his department, and we would be advising him.

Now, that was an integral part of the process. Some of these people were

relatively new to me. Bob McNamara was a good example. I spent an evening in my suite at the Mayflower with Bob McNamara, telling him as best I could, as diplomatically as I could, the political facts of life as we saw them, now that he was a member of the team. And this fellow had not had an experience like that before. So, you know, you had to be very careful about how you presented it. It might take a few hours over dinner before you finally painted the whole picture.

G: Were they all receptive to this element, dimension?

O: Yes. I think in a couple of instances you had to be. . . . Some obviously not only were receptive, but they knew the name of the game, but there were others that just never had been in politics. Then, with all of that, while sitting in Palm Beach and the selection process is reasonably completed, we're talking about the White House staff, about relations with the Congress, and we look at, I guess they call it, the green book where it listed the positions in departments, agencies, starting with the White House staff, and it was like looking at a Christmas catalog.

The President-elect and I are looking at this book, thumbing through it and discovering all of those goodies. We talked about the White House, and I think it again underscored our lack of basic understanding of the whole process, the separation of powers, in terms of how you deal with the Congress. Because I remember that the top special assistant to Eisenhower, Bryce Harlow, was special assistant for congressional relations. And then there was an administrative assistant for personnel and Kennedy suggested to me that we combine the two jobs, because we both understood personnel meant patronage. It sort of fitted, congressional relations-patronage, and the title would be special assistant for congressional relations and personnel. And we both thought that was a whale of an idea, and that's what happened.

Tape 2 of 5, Side 1

O: --press relations and personnel, and we were busily engaged, among other things, or I was, in the upcoming inauguration, because there again, we wanted to ensure that all our friends and loyal supporters around the country had an opportunity to participate in this great event. So again we were involved in organizational activity. Simultaneously, I had to work on my assignment. I had no perception of it, no knowledge of it, even to the point where perhaps somebody might have to steer me toward the Hill.

The fact of the matter was that all I could do and did was talk to a couple of people that had had some White House experience in Democratic administrations: Dave Bell, Clark Clifford, Charlie Murphy. They'd tell me about it, give me a feel for it, and relate how the President, President Truman, or [in the case of] Jim Rowe, President Roosevelt, handled their relationships with the Hill in the context of their legislative programs. There had been no formalization at any time; it was just sort of seat-of-the-pants. The President might make a call or send somebody to see someone. But it wasn't organized. I guess I wasn't shocked or stunned because I didn't know

whether it required organization.

We took the occasion to ask a couple of old hands that were knowledgeable to give us a written evaluation or analysis of this kind of activity. One was Clark Clifford, the other was Dick Neustadt. We did know that the first occasion for the White House to have a formalized congressional relations entity was under Eisenhower with Bryce Harlow. I hadn't met Bryce Harlow, and inauguration was upon us. Bryce Harlow had called me and had offered his services, which I deeply appreciated. It turned out after I did get to know him that he was just a really fine fellow. He was very helpful.

But in any event it began to penetrate what Bryce Harlow's role was in this formalized congressional relations activity in the Eisenhower Administration. And it seemed to me, from what little I'd learned, in fleeting moments before actually going in the White House, that the congressional relations activity in the Eisenhower Administration had focused on blocking legislation, avoiding its arrival at the White House for a potential veto, because they were dealing with a Democratic Congress and they had no very meaningful legislative program of their own. So it was sort of, if you can call it that, a negative approach: see what you can do up there to stop Democrats from enacting legislation that we disapprove of.

The Clark Clifford presentation, as I recall it, was [to] have a White House activity that was very limited in staff, was not involved in a public context, tried to avoid general knowledge of its existence, and did not engage the departments and agencies in joint activity. Let them (departments and agencies) handle their own matters directly with the Congress.

Dick Neustadt chose to chat with me as part of a written outline that he presented and his view was just the opposite--that you should enlist the aid in an organized sense of everyone you could throughout the administration. This was a big effort--you were dealing with five hundred and thirty-five people--and as you would not have a large White House staff, you'd have to look elsewhere for support. And it wasn't because of any knowledge I had of what was going to transpire, but I guess by nature most of my life had been organizing and maximizing the potential. I knew some congressmen and senators, but not well, and only in the political context, certainly not in the legislative context. So I decided that we ought to try to build an organization in the executive branch. I had been forewarned by both Clifford and Neustadt that it was a very sensitive area. The separation of powers was there, and it certainly could be counterproductive if you didn't handle whatever activities you engaged in with an understanding of this great sensitivity, impact, or recognition of the constitutional provisions.

In any event, none of this was in place come Inauguration Day. I had developed a list of possible staff people. Somewhere along the line Mike Manatos was brought to my attention. I contacted Mike and asked if he'd like to join the White House staff as the Senate representative. Henry Hall Wilson, similarly, who had been very active in the Kennedy campaign, very close to Terry Sanford, and a member of the state legislature in

North Carolina--I asked him to join us. And I had a fellow that was associated with me and continued to be associated with me intimately over his lifetime, and that was Claude Desautels. These were supplemented from time to time by others over those years: Chuck Daly, who later was vice president of Harvard and the University of Chicago; Dick Donahue, a very prominent, very able attorney from Massachusetts and a long-time Kennedy associate. And there were others in later years, but basically the White House staff started with Manatos, Henry Hall Wilson, and Claude Desautels, my administrative assistant, and my long-time secretary, Phyllis Maddock.

G: Was there anybody that you tried to get that you couldn't get to join the staff?

O: No, and I really didn't know what to look for. You have to understand that this was from ground zero, and all of the organization that ultimately took place over the first few months of the Kennedy Administration, putting it in place and refining it, was not remotely in place or really carefully thought out by inauguration time. In fact, it was so, if you will, disjointed that we all went into the White House the day after inauguration and we didn't even have office assignments.

I hadn't seen Bryce Harlow. I called Bryce; I was just stuck with the inauguration. Again, it was the politics of it. I didn't want any disappointed long-time Kennedy campaign leaders. And I concentrated on all of that, and Phyllis went over to the White House. I got to call Bryce and apologize that I haven't been back to him, and I was looking forward to sitting down with him. Well, Phyllis went over. He said, "Well, maybe some of the details of the way the White House operates I can go over with Phyllis." And that was very kind of him. She went over and spent several hours with him. That was the extent of my knowledge of it. I'd never been in the building, even as a tourist.

So we walked in, with the staff, and looked around the two floors. I don't think I even knew the basement was there. And I found this corner office on the second floor, and I noted that there was space for two secretaries and a conference room, and about three offices. So I planted myself in the center office and my staff on each end. And that's how the office was established. Somebody then suggested that everybody on the staff go downstairs to the Fish Room, outside the Oval Office, to be sworn in. I didn't go downstairs. I was never really sworn in. (Laughter)

Now what do you do, where do you go and how do you put this together? Well, I received this call from a fellow that was over in the EOB building next door--the old State Department. He introduced himself to me on the phone and said he was looking forward, along with the personnel staff, to meeting their new boss. And he knew it was premature, but inasmuch as it was snowing he thought he would get directions from me regarding my decision on whether or not to close down the federal establishment early that day. I was obviously taken aback, and I said, "Well, let me get back to you." So I called Phyllis in and I said, "Let's see if we can find what department of government has responsibility for the Weather Bureau." Lo and behold, there was a fellow by the name of Dan [Clarence Daniel] Martin, Jr., who was under secretary of commerce, who had been a staunch

Kennedy supporter from California, and under him came the Weather Bureau as we noted in the table of organization.

Well, that was a relief, because I knew Dan intimately, and I called him. And I said, "How are you doing?" "Fine." I said, "What decision are you going to make today, Dan, on closing the federal establishment?" Of course, he didn't know a thing more about what I was talking about than I did when this Lyons called me. "God, what?" I said, "Well, the Weather Bureau [is under you]." He said, "It is?" And I said, "Yes, you're responsible for the Weather Bureau. So you'd better just check on what the procedure has been in the past, determine whether the projected snowfall justifies early departure of the federal employees for their homes, and I'll give you the extension number of Mr. Lyons, and you can advise him on your decision." I hung up. In addition, there were half a dozen telegrams laying on my desk inviting me to various functions, get-acquainted functions, of federal unions, employee unions. It hit: personnel wasn't what the President and I had envisioned at all. This was the job of maintaining liaison with the various elements of the federal employee establishment, which was of no interest to me whatsoever. I then had Phyllis check with the printing office; it was too late to eliminate "and personnel" from my title in the *Congressional Directory*, so it stayed there for a year. And I never did to this day meet Mr. Lyons or any of the staff over in the EOB building.

So with that, and with all of the excitement of this new experience, we scheduled the first leadership meeting with the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, the weekly breakfast meeting, four days after the inauguration. The first order of business in the House would be the vote on expanding the Rules Committee. So at the leadership breakfast, the President welcomed the leaders; pointed out that there would be a leadership breakfast on a regular basis, and we chatted for a while.

Then the President said to the Speaker, "You have the vote on expanding the Rules Committee scheduled as the first order of business." The Speaker said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, we're going to vote tomorrow." And the President, I'm sure, assumed that everything was in order. It was a fairly routine activity in the house. Mr. Rayburn said, however, "I'm concerned about it." "Oh?" "Yes, as a matter of fact, I don't think we have the votes. It's very, very difficult, and we've had compromise after compromise on what to do with the Rules Committee, but now this expansion and the assignment of these new members to the Rules Committee would give us, as we saw it, just a majority, that's all, to bring your program to the floor." So whatever else was discussed at the leadership breakfast eludes me, and probably everything else that might have been discussed that morning eluded me because I was in a state of semishock.

So after the leadership breakfast the President and I discussed this and it dawned on us that, my God, we can't let this go forward. So the Speaker was contacted.

G: Did you call him or did the President call him?

O: The President called him. And he came down again that afternoon, and as a result of the

discussion he agreed to postpone it for a week. And if you want a cold shower, you've had it; if you wanted to learn how congressional relations are supposed to function, you're going to have a quick learning process, and we had to try to develop a head count.

There were some close and friendly Democrats up there we contacted who we thought would be in a position because of their seniority to be helpful to us in trying to determine what the true story was. There was no head count or anything; Rayburn was worried--that was his gut feeling, and it turned out he was right, of course.

So we got together with Congressmen Frank Thompson, Carl Elliott, Bob Jones, I believe, and went over every member of the House and their perception on how these fellows could be categorized at that point. Got hold of Bobby, and Stu Udall, [who] was a former member of the House and was now in the cabinet; got hold of Andy Biemiller of the AFL-CIO, and we tried to put together to the best of our ability a head count, and that head count showed that we would lose the Rules fight by at least seven votes, probably more. That was our most optimistic view.

I have some statistics here, because I wanted to recall it. You take the breakdown of the House at the outset of the Kennedy presidency. First, we had lost twenty-one Democrats in the Kennedy presidential election victory. The coalition, so-called, of southern Democrats and Republicans was well known, and it had been effective in many ways during the Eisenhower period. My notes indicate the vote was scheduled for January 25 and it was postponed to January 31. That may or may not be accurate.

G: That's what my notes show, too.

O: At that moment, the House consisted of 174 Republicans, 151 Democrats, non-southern, 108 southern Democrats, and two vacancies. So clearly, the only way this could be put together was to get a minimum of twenty Republicans, as we tried to put numbers to this, a third of the southern Democrats, and a united non-southern Democratic vote. The southern Democrats had been subjected to a great deal of pressure and media attention back in their districts, to varying degrees throughout the South, opposing any change in the Rules Committee, Judge [Howard] Smith or the others. And I remember Overton Brooks of Louisiana saying that it was so difficult. After the fact he told me that he had been viciously attacked by his local media and he had a cross burned on his lawn. So that was what we were up against.

But the time was utilized to the best of our ability. We didn't have the staff, you know, in agencies or departments of government; we just went at it, one on one, phone calls and what have you. During the entire course of that several days, we did not involve the President. The President finally made one call, and that was to the chairman of the North Carolina delegation, Harold Cooley, and he asked Cooley if he couldn't help--on the basis of our head count there was a serious problem with the North Carolina delegation. We felt maybe this was the delegation that might take a second look, or some of them. Cooley convened them--he'd agreed to do that--and I assume that he probably didn't exert

any great pressure on them, but they did discuss the matter, discuss the President's interest, and Cooley then told the whole world that the President had called him. Then some of the media decided that if he had called Cooley, he must have been calling the world, which wasn't the case.

But anyway, the effort was expended to the best of our ability, and the end result was that we won by five votes. And I believe that we got--what?--twenty-two Republicans.

G: That's right.

O: I had it broken down. Yes, twenty-two Republicans. We got thirty-four southern Democrats, which was close to one-third of the southern Democrats, and we got a solid additional Democratic vote, and we won by five votes.

Now, first of all, as belated as our recognition of the seriousness of this problem [was], the effect a loss would have had on anything we attempted to do with the Congress would have been far-reaching, but we had salvaged it for the moment. If we had failed, there wouldn't have been, in my judgment, any Kennedy program during that two-year period that would have gotten to the floor of the House.

The other aspect of it, however, was that with the effort we expended over about a week, with the closeness of the vote, with the anticipation that you were not apt to get twenty Republican votes in many matters up there, clearly we were faced with a very difficult situation, but at least we had salvaged enough so that we would have a chance to give it a real try in due course.

But it was a lesson, and that lesson brought me to the realization that I'd better move as quickly and as vigorously as possible to put together an organized congressional relations entity in the executive branch of government. And so we proceeded posthaste. And that, as it unfolded, took the form of weekly, written, detailed reports that had to be submitted by noontime every Monday from every department and agency, reviewing what had transpired between their department or agency and the Congress the prior week, projecting what they anticipated the next week and beyond, and explaining to the best of their ability any failure of movement, and [they were] to be as specific and detailed as possible.

We then, in our small staff, would analyze and evaluate those reports on Monday afternoon, compile the salient elements for the President's night reading on Monday night, and develop the agenda, at least the domestic side of the agenda, legislative side of the agenda, for the President for the breakfast meeting with the congressional leaders on Tuesday morning. In addition, the some-forty congressional relations people from these departments and agencies would meet with us regularly at our direction, in the White House, and we would review, face-to-face, the entire legislative program, so that all departments and agencies knew their responsibility and the responsibility of their

respective bosses in the cabinet. It extended even well beyond their own departments and agencies, so that they were responsible, indeed, got specific assignments from time to time, for legislative matters that didn't relate to their department or agency directly.

We then endeavored to orchestrate Kennedy's contact with the Congress, and that took a variety of forms. We put into effect briefing sessions with selected members of Congress, probably specific committee members depending on the issues at the moment, in the White House. Twenty or thirty members would come in, and the President would meet with them directly and review the specific matter of the moment. We had individual meetings with key members of Congress that would come in the back door, if you will, of the White House, not on the President's schedule: Bob Kerr, Wilbur Mills, people like that, on a regular basis.

We would develop a program where every department and agency that had good news to announce, contracts in a member's state or district, or whatever--Defense Department contracts would be a good example--were to advise us of these decisions and the anticipated announcement, and we developed in the White House, on my staff, a procedure to notify "friendly" quote, unquote, members of the House and Senate, twenty-four hours in advance of these announcements from the department or agency so that they could get out their own press releases to their local media.

How do you utilize the President? At this point I think it's worth mentioning that President Kennedy had spent four terms in the House, eight years; one term in the Senate, six years. He had been on the Hill fourteen years, but he had not been part of the establishment on the Hill. He had not been a total, full-time activist in that sense. He did not have the kind of seniority in either the House or Senate, obviously, to be a prime mover. He was very much junior to all his former colleagues, and how do you utilize him? The Cooley experience indicated that you would husband the President's direct intervention, that you never wanted to reach a point where the President's direct involvement would cause members on the floor to say, "Oh, I got another call from the President today." You wanted that member, if he said anything, to say, "What do you think, buddy, happened? I got a call from the President today." He talked to the President of the United States. And that, of course, was the way to go, and it was the only way you could maintain presidential impact, hopefully at a given moment under extreme circumstances.

G: Was the key to doing that limiting the President's--?

O: It was ensuring that anytime the President intervened, it would have an individual or collective impact. Whether it succeeded in accomplishing the purpose was another thing. But there would be a recognition on the Hill that you don't hear directly from the President, or the President will not call you down to the White House unless he is directly, seriously involved and this means everything to him. And you've tried to use every other source of persuasion to the fullest in every conceivable way before you bring the President into the act, and you try to avoid doing that because there will always be another time. If

there's not a need for it, a perceivable need, then you shouldn't do it, and you shouldn't--my responsibility was to husband the President's time and effort, and the easy route was to say, "Here's a list, Mr. President. In your spare time why don't you call these thirty fellows? Or have them come down one by one?" It just didn't make sense; it would be counterproductive over the long haul. It would be meaningless ultimately.

Just as a statistic, through this organized effort, in 1961, the first year of President Kennedy's term, he presided over thirty-two leadership breakfasts. He had ninety group meetings the first year in the White House, by personal invitation of the President, meeting directly with selected groups of members of the House and Senate. He had five hundred members, the entire Congress, at one time or another at coffee hours, which were informal. They weren't briefing sessions, they were just little social hours. We had a regularly scheduled ceremony every bill signing--we made sure that we extended personal invitations to appropriate members of Congress to participate in every bill signing. Every member of the Congress received a letter personally from the President on his birthday with birthday greetings. I took the occasion to send a letter to every member, too, on his birthday. That became an established procedure. I had the *Sequoia* made available to me to take out small groups of members at appropriate times--and this became a regular event--for a three-hour trip on the Potomac, where we'd have a buffet dinner and maybe an accordion player, at times, or a sing-along. We would leave the dock at 6:00 p.m., return at 9:00. And that became the greatest tool available to us, and I utilized it to the fullest. It became a great bore to be on that *Sequoia* for my wife for three hours, sometimes two and three times a week. (Laughter)

- G: When we talked last time, you made the comment, I suspect not in jest, that you felt that one of President Carter's biggest mistakes was selling the *Sequoia*.
- O: (Laughter) I guess you shouldn't say we were appalled. It isn't that big a thing in that sense, but I certainly reflected upon the *Sequoia* when I read about the President and his economy drive--all presidents have economy drives, but we'll get into those. President Kennedy had one and President Johnson had one. So Jimmy Carter had his, and the *Sequoia* was just a great help in maintaining this dialogue and improving this relationship and getting better acquainted, whatever way you want to describe it. There was nothing approaching it. For instance, I was in Washington just two weeks ago, and I was talking to some of our old friends. Two members that I talked to brought up the *Sequoia* to me and reflected on the times that I had invited them on the *Sequoia*. And they never saw it again.
- G: Well, you described at length how you found out about the White House proper, and allocated your own office space, and things of this [nature]. How did you become aware of the *Sequoia* and--?
- O: I became aware of it in the sense that it was one of two, as I recall, presidential yachts. And it was the largest of the two and therefore it could accommodate more people. And the recognition that it is a presidential yacht, the president can designate the utilization of

it as he sees fit, and the president doesn't use it very often. So that moment it occurred, the light went on and I thought to myself, "It's too bad to have that yacht [and] staff over there on the dock somewhere. I can think of a way to utilize it, hopefully effectively." And I spoke to the President about it, and I had the free use of the *Sequoia*, unless the President was using it, on a designated time frame, from then on.

G: Were there others that you had to negotiate times with, or did you have first dibs after the President?

O: No, first dibs after the President. I don't recall any time being told that the *Sequoia* would not be available when I wanted it.

G: Did you go out on it with the President first, before this, at least to become--?

O: No.

G: You just found out that the yacht existed and--?

O: There were a couple of occasions with President Kennedy and President Johnson that I was on the *Sequoia*, not related to this activity but, no, all I knew was, hey, how many people can it accommodate, and how many people can be handled reasonably? They have a pleasant little trip down to Mount Vernon and have the salute and the music play and turn around and come back. And [you] utilize that three hours of confinement to make it as pleasant as you can, with food and drink, but also circulate and put little groups together on the *Sequoia* so that at the end of the three hours you've felt you might have made your sales pitch, hopefully effectively, and not to such an extent that you turn anyone off, so that they did leave feeling that it was a social hour but incidentally there was some conversation about some pending legislation that they were significantly involved with.

G: Would you speak generally to the group or would you speak one on one to--?

O: One on one. Or when you got with one, then you'd keep your eyes open and maybe you'd want to bring one or two more into that little corner of the boat for that little chat.

G: Did you normally organize the trips around a legislative issue? Let's say if a bill was coming to a vote, would you get the people who were--?

O: You tried to, but it didn't work out quite that way because you wanted to utilize it as often as you could. So there were times where you just tried to anticipate that you would be busily engaged with these fellows say a month or two from now, and it wouldn't hurt a bit to just get to know them better, have them know you better, and have a pleasant social evening with them prior to trying to convince them to be supportive.

G: Say, for example, if you had a labor bill, minimum wage or something like that and you

were working on this particular element, would you have lobbyists or people from, let's say, the labor movement, invited as well?

O: No, this was confined. No, I wouldn't do that. I thought about that, frankly, but then I thought, "That's just takes away some of the niceties of the whole thing." So it was confined to my wife and me with one or two members of the White House staff, depending on the circumstances. And it was always a melding of senators and congressmen; you never did an exclusive either way, sort of balanced it that way. And really, it was an opportunity that was there, available. These people were all on standby on the *Sequoia*, just waiting for the President or under the President's direction, somebody to say, "Okay, tonight you're going out."

But what else can you do? You see, in that first year, literally, as a statistic, President Kennedy had 2,500 individual contacts with members of Congress. Now, that's really from our records. That took all those forms that I enumerated, but that's direct contact: there's been a chat; there's been a briefing; there's been a visit under any number of circumstances. This doesn't include any contacts that we on the staff made at all. This was presidential. So at the end of the year we felt that we had utilized his time fairly. He and I had a standing sort of--I don't know how to describe it, but I'd say, "Mr. President, I've got three dates I'd like to put on the calendar for some coffee hours or briefings. I have a few dates, and I think we ought to get it done." "Well, all right, come on, level with me. How many dates and what are you involving me in?" He'd always agree. You know, I tried to make it just as light as I could and get by and say to Ken O'Donnell, "Okay, it's done. Put them on the schedule."

But he was accommodating. I had to recognize we had our problems--it did involve his New Frontier program--but he had problems that extended far beyond that, and his time had to be properly utilized. And it couldn't be wasted; it couldn't be something to engage in small talk, it had to have some meaning to it if I was carving out of his schedule X amount of time over a period of weeks and months.

And how do you supplement it? We came up with another idea, and this was all part of trying to do an organized effort. We decided to have Sunday brunches at my home. We had rented a house in Georgetown, and so that became a regular activity of ours. We tried to meld members of Congress and their wives with members of the media, and I was really surprised how successful they were, because it would be a simple sort of breakfast, a little buffet--just have a table and have some bacon and scrambled eggs and baked beans or something, and a bloody mary if you wanted it. That was the extent of it. And it would start at noontime and go just like any social time you have at your home, a couple of hours or so, and people would drift away.

I remember the first one I had. There'd be a half a dozen media people I'd invite: Joe Alsop, who at that time was an extremely important member of the media; his column was extremely important to everybody. And I invited Joe, and Joe came, and Joe was so struck by the whole thing and the people he met that the next day he called me and asked

me if I would include him in some future ones because he just enjoyed it so much and it meant a lot to him. He met people. What amazed me about those meetings was that, particularly on the House side, you had important members of Congress: Wilbur Mills, Al [Albert] Thomas, the fellow that was chairman of the Appropriations Committee from Texas--

G: Oh, George Mahon.

O: George Mahon. You know, another twenty of that level in Congress that--this is long before House reform. And to have a brunch and to have three or four fellows like that along with half a dozen, or whatever it was, younger members of the House and Senate, and have Walter Lippmann and Joe Alsop, people like that, saying to me, "Who is that fellow over there?" Or having Al Thomas say, "That's Walter Lippmann? I've never met him." Or "That's Joe Alsop? I've never met him." What I realized early on was that with all of these people reporting about Washington, particularly the more senior and more widely known columnists and senior reporters, a great deal of their personal contact and concentration was on the Senate side of the Congress.

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O: The brunch [was part of] that continuing effort, again, I repeat the cliché: maximize your potential. And the objective--I'd have members of my White House staff at these brunches-- we were trying in every conceivable way to get to know these people, to have some reason for contact. They talked about patronage, you know, as though you could control the Congress through some patronage device. And it was just not realistic; it never has been and never will be. First of all, it's very limited. Sure, Congress might recommend somebody to be an assistant secretary of something or other. Maybe six congressmen recommended somebody; maybe three or four senators recommended somebody. An ultimate decision has to be made and there are going to be nine disappointed people and one that feels pleased. That's a task that has to be discharged. What do you do in servicing these people or trying to ensure that they know that you care about them, you're interested in them, and you recognize their importance? And all of these things I've discussed are all part of it.

Now, constantly, every day, I had reams of phone calls from the Congress, from members of the House and Senate, and sometimes it was a hang-up on a constituent inquiry; maybe a department or agency was aggravating the member because he couldn't get a response, that sort thing. And we were quick to do that. Every cabinet member knew that Larry O'Brien calling him called for an immediate response.

G: You were sort of an ombudsman for the Congress then in terms of [inaudible].

O: You did; that was part of it, too. And it was just a part of trying to be as alert as you could, and as communicative as you could with these people. And oftentimes the day would end and you hadn't completed your phone calls, but all of us on the staff, four or

five of us, would see to it that our phone lists were complete. And we knew that complete meant that that return call had been made, or attempted, even if it were six or seven or eight o'clock at night. No answer in the office, maybe you'd call the man's home. You tried to find some way of letting a man know that you did return his call, although you [had] missed each other, and not have that hang over.

All of that was geared to the day, which was every day, that you were going to drop by offices. You'd walk in, and the staff would know who you were at least--you were from the White House. And the member would not be reluctant to see you, and in most instances, frankly, he would be pleased that you dropped by. Now, that drop-by may be at the time when you're trying to prevail upon the member to change his point of view and support you. People used to envision that that was some kind of a weapon that you could use or something, but it was human relations. And I'll tell you, out of every five occasions when we or any one of us would try to persuade a member to come aboard who was reluctant or a question mark or indeed, had indicated he was voting wrong as we saw it, I'd say four out of five times those efforts were personalized: "The President would appreciate it." And I remember [on] so many occasions, I'd say, "Gee, don't do this. The President's having a hell of a time as it is. You know it's tough up here." And very honestly, I think that was more effective than debating the substance.

Now, they'd talk about constituents: "Well, I'd like to go along with you, but this is going to hurt me." We had the cardinal overriding rule: you never, never suggest remotely to a member that he should commit political hara-kiri to support the President. Understand, he was elected to office; none of us have been. There's only one guy downtown in that White House that was elected to anything and his name is Kennedy, and up there, there were five hundred and thirty-five people that have constituents and want to stay in office and you've got to be realistic, you've got to be understanding, and on the occasion when the fellow says sorry, but no, don't take it personally at all. There'll be another occasion when maybe it will be yes, or maybe, or I'll abstain, or I'll pair, or something. Somewhere along the line, if you stay with it, and you communicate and you get to know people more and more, there's going to be a greater tendency on the part of that individual to try to be helpful to you somewhere, somehow. As long as it isn't going to cause him great political harm, at least potentially.

For example, foreign aid, which we will get to. Ultimately, and it took a long time to get into this, [we would] do an analysis of the expenditures of foreign aid money district by district. People disliked foreign aid but if you could point out to them over in Missouri that X number of dollars flowed into companies and to employees in Missouri of foreign aid money as part of that foreign aid budget, that could be helpful in suggesting to the members' constituents that it wasn't a giveaway program, that they got a piece of the action.

Now, I don't know, but you kept trying to think of these things, to develop them. Then the most sensitive part of it, and that was the difficulty because you had to be so careful. When I started in the job, first of all, I didn't know Mr. Rayburn. I had to get to

know him somehow. I would see him at the leadership breakfasts, I understood that, but I had to be up there and I had to see if I couldn't be a fellow who could drop in with some regularity and have a nice pleasant visit. And that applied to the Speaker on down through the key people in the Congress, in the House and in the Senate.

G: Was Rayburn approachable in that sense? Could you set up an appointment and just go and--?

O: At the outset it wasn't easy. He didn't make it difficult, but it was something that took him out of his normal pattern; here was this guy from the White House, you know. So I made the point when I'd make an appointment in advance, and I'd get the appointment but when I went in, I would play it as low key as possible and elicit from Mr. Rayburn conversation about Sam Rayburn and his life and his background and his experiences. And over a period of time it got so that I would drop in regularly, the blinds would be drawn; his eyesight was obviously deteriorating. He was using the spittoon and hitting it remarkably well, and he would talk about the Texas Rangers and the porch on his house that he used for an office, and all of the years, and how he tries to tell these members that you get this publicity in Washington, you enjoy the Washington social life, but you won't be here long if you don't remember back home and pay attention to back home, and all of this.

Well, that's going on. On the Senate side, Mike Mansfield is extremely supportive and without my effort said to me at the outset, "This back room in my office suite, this room is yours to come and go as you please and have any meetings you want to in here."

G: So was that your base on the Hill then? I was going to ask you about that.

O: Yes.

G: Did you keep any staff there or did--?

O: Oh, no, no.

G: Did you requisition some of their staff?

O: No, on the Senate side, let's talk about Mike's role. Hubert was the number-two fellow in the leadership, but Mike was--I don't know whether I'd call him reticent--not a gregarious guy, let's put it that way, but very interested in the President's program, and he had been a Lyndon Johnson supporter for the nomination. But he was a staunch, loyal, just completely committed and dedicated supporter of the New Frontier program and Kennedy. And it was nice to be able to come into the back door of that room, and I would go and have a cup of coffee with him during the course of the day. Mike Manatos had the daily contact responsibilities, but I would be in with him [Mansfield], and depending on what was going on at the moment, he would arrange to have somebody go out on the floor and call in the appropriate senators, whether it was Bob Kerr, Clint Anderson, or what have you, so we could talk about our interests in the legislation, maybe

talk about an amendment or whatever. And then he'd even have a group of senators come in at lunch from time to time, where he'd serve lunch and I'd sit there, and he'd say, "Okay, Larry, now you tell them your sad story," or "Go ahead." And I'd make my pitch. Now, my God, you know, that's of tremendous value. Well, in the course of this, and with Rayburn, it got so that I didn't make an appointment. I didn't have to. I would drop in, and I would say, "Is the Speaker in?" "Oh, wait a couple of minutes; he's got somebody in there. I'm sure he'll be glad to see you." So it became informal, dropping by.

So then it got to the next stage. With John McCormack I had a personal problem, at least I envisioned it might be, because I had been a Young Turk back in Massachusetts in the Kennedy group that got into a big battle with the McCormack people over control of the party structure there. And being an arrogant young guy, as you're apt to be when you're young, I thought that those old geezers ought to be thrown out and we'd take over. And it became a real riot in Massachusetts, not to get into all of that. But that was in the background. So it was with a little trepidation that I would walk in to see John. Well, to the contrary, John couldn't have been more cooperative and pleasant and gave me advice right from the start. Carl Albert and Hale Boggs were tremendous guys, and Sam--you know, he was a little remote, but at least I had established some contact with him. And so had Henry Hall Wilson.

In any event, you've got to take it to another stage, and that's where the sensitivity came in. It was unheard of, I'm sure unprecedented, to have a joint head count, [between the White House staff and the congressional leadership], House and Senate--to sit down, actually in a room on the Hill, compare notes on the members of the House and the members of the Senate, with the leadership of the House and Senate, the Democratic leadership, and work out a joint head count. Now you're getting perilously close to violating the separation of powers, and there was a little flak on the House side in that regard. Because as this moved along, Rayburn and McCormack would call in the regional whips, and then we'd go over the whole--well, you know, you might as well set up shop up on the Hill, you're just about at the verge of that. There was no outward indication of any disturbance about it, but, I can't remember who it was, finally I saw an item in a column one day that one of the whips had said that he had registered his objection to the Speaker or the leadership about the incursion of the White House--O'Brien and his people from the White House--who had moved into activities up there that he felt weren't appropriate or proper in terms of the separation of the Congress and the White House. But that blew over, and I never had it brought directly to my attention.

So over a period of time and then through the Johnson period [there were] even more refinements, more activities, so that it was a totally accepted procedure. And it was unprecedented. It wasn't motivated by any great strokes of smartness or genius or anything else; it was purely trying to utilize what you had available to try to cope with your responsibilities to promote the President's program with the Congress. And how do you do it? You did it the best way you could and tried to personalize it in human terms.

G: Tell me, what was the significance of the joint head count? Did that give you an added

leverage because of the dynamics between the two? How did that work?

O: Well, it was a cross reference and double check, for one thing, because you get to John Smith and we'd say, "Our information on John Smith is that he's right." The regional whip or the leader would say, "I question that. What's your source?" And then you go into that: "Because I feel that he has not made up his mind, that he's a question mark." So you go over name after name, and then [when] you get to the end of it, you have the number of rights, the number of wrongs, and the number of question marks. Then you get to what are the possibilities, and you put together a possibility list. Then you determine whether one of the whips or somebody else should be contacting the member, or somebody from downtown ought to be contacting the member again, or jointly you should be contacting the member, or the member should be asked by Sam Rayburn, and later John McCormack, who vigorously got into all of this, to come into his office to have a personal chat and McCormack would, incidentally, take on a lot of this. He would bring them off the floor all day long one-by-one to try to see if he couldn't sell them. So you pooled your intelligence.

Now, you had an outside part of the head count and that was the White House outside, not White House-Congress jointly outside. And that would be head counts that we'd engage in that we would bring into the White House Biemiller and others in the AFL-CIO, maybe depending on the circumstances the teachers' federations or whatever, unions of one sort, or people that are natural allies, or allies in this given instance. Then you would bring them in and you'd work the head count there. That head count would be utilized after you refined as best you could the joint head count on the Hill.

G: I see. But in these joint head counts on the Hill, would you have the House leadership and the Senate leadership there together?

O: No, no.

G: Oh, by joint you mean joint White House and legislative [liaison staff], but you wouldn't combine the two legislative sides?

O: No. On the Senate side, of course, it was always much simpler. You know, it's again the numbers. So we'd sit in Mansfield's office on the Senate side, and Bobby Baker, who was in a key position in those early days, would join in the head count. And Mike would call in probably the chairman of the appropriate committee, or others, whatever, and we'd work out the head count of the hundred. Now, you're working out a head count of four hundred and thirty-five over on the other side and it can be much more complex.

On the Senate side, you could get to that bottom line pretty well with the contributions. Baker was very good, you know. He was very knowledgeable and he'd just be around the floor and then he'd check out the ten or eleven and just see what the feel was. We would be talking to them directly. We had occasions, as you know, in these legislative struggles, to deal with the Republican side of the aisle. Ev [Everett] Dirksen,

specifically, was dealt with with regularity. On the House side [we dealt with] Charlie Halleck, Gerry Ford, and a handful of others up there that were in key positions. At times you'd find a friendly member. [William] McCulloch was a stalwart in the whole civil rights struggle in the House Judiciary Committee, and he was the senior minority member of the committee.

But you knew that you'd better not spin too many wheels. You knew that under normal circumstances the maximum number of Republicans that you could attempt to do business with in a New Frontier legislative proposal probably was limited to no more than thirty, and that was based on the districts they represented. And on the Senate side it wouldn't be any more than [a handful], if indeed it was a handful. [Jacob] Javits comes to my mind, because Javits was a New York congressman and therefore there'd be an inclination on the part of Javits--or John Lindsay when Javits was a New York senator or Lindsay a New York congressman. Now, Lindsay voted with us on some occasions because it was in his best interests to do that.

(Interruption)

It should be mentioned at this time that it might be well to consider the role of the Vice President in the legislative process, because apparently, and I never had direct knowledge of this but it was perceived by me, [he had some] sensitivity regarding the initial treatment he received in terms of his colleagues in the Senate and what his continuing role would be with them. I think that bothered him for a long time. I'll tell you that we never had a Senate head count in Mike Mansfield's office, or a substantive discussion with a senator or senators in Mike Mansfield's office, without requesting the presence of the Vice President, who was across the hall in his office. And the Vice President would come over and join us, because there'd generally be a group or something where we were sitting around a table. And he'd participate fully in all of the give and take, and the guessing games at times about attitudes, or the perception of why I thought [someone] might be for or against, and all the things that go into trying to develop a majority vote.

But you have to remember, too, that in the Senate we had a much easier time. The Senate was strongly Democratic anyway, even though it had its composition of southern Democrats. The fact is that you had a pretty darned good shot at an up vote, a plus vote, most of the time in the Senate, if you put the work and effort into it. I'm not suggesting it was just a simple rollover, but it was just easier to handle, easier in the sense that the number of people you were dealing with, the Democratic-Republican breakdown in the Senate, and you had Mansfield and Humphrey in the leadership, both of them working arduously on behalf of the program. And the Vice President would participate in all these meetings, and his input was always sought and welcomed. But nevertheless, I was never quite sure--I never discussed it with the Vice President, or later President for that matter--but I always had the feeling that he was sensitive to what he perceived as somewhat of a change in the attitude of senators toward him, because he was no longer a member of the club.

G: Was he more tentative than he had been before, do you think?

O: Seemed to be or--yes. And certainly I didn't see any indications of personal effort along the often-reported, traditional, Johnson nose-to-nose, chest-to-chest persuasion. He had stepped back from that. But he was ever present and involved and interested. It didn't even have to do with the Senate. I remember on one occasion, when it had to do with I think perhaps Medicare, and we had that long bout with Medicare that extended into the Johnson presidency. We had Kerr-Mills; we had Wilbur Mills' reluctance to go with our program; we had the terrific effort being made by the American Medical Association and others to block all this; we had in Kerr, obviously, on the Senate side a very strong member that wielded a lot of power. All of this added up to an effort that extended, as you know, over a long period of time before we began to approach a breakthrough.

I remember, and I believe it was in that context, at some stage I was talking to the Vice President, and I may have suggested to him that perhaps he could talk to Wilbur Mills, or three or four members in the House. It might not even have been Medicare, but I think it involved three or four key members of the House on this particular issue. This was in the White House one day, and we had just left a meeting in the Cabinet Room and were standing in the hallway. And he said, "Well, sure, I'll be happy to. I'll get hold of them. But Larry, I just wonder about my influence on them. I just wonder about my impact. I'm not sure that it really may mean as much as you think," something like that, that indicated to me that that was a feeling he retained throughout.

When I first took over the task, he contacted me and we visited, and he at that time said he was fully prepared and would have the time to do it and he was located up in the Senate, to be a total participant in the effort and that he fully intended to do that. Which was great. And he invited my wife and I out to his house one evening and we spent a long evening just chatting. And it was clear--this was early on--that he envisioned that he could make a continuing significant contribution to the movement of the New Frontier program in the Congress generally and in the Senate specifically. And he undertook that with these head counts and these meetings we'd have and these strategy sessions we'd have. But I don't think he felt, as time went on, as comfortable as he had envisioned in this activity, or that he was really making the impact he had hoped to make.

G: Do you think it was a result of that caucus where it was [inaudible]?

O: I think that was part of it. It had to be. I never, as I said, was intimate with what took place, I was just on the periphery of that activity. But it became widely known that there had been an impasse of sorts or a degree of conflict, or that Lyndon Johnson had been diplomatically advised that he was not going to be playing the role he envisioned.

G: Do you think it had to do with his own disillusionment with the vice presidency in general and perhaps--?

O: No. I think that, no, it was more personal than that. It was that he was a member of the club for a long time, and somehow or other he was--what do they do with people on occasion? They become a member emeritus, sort of. You know, you're just not as intimate with us as you used to be; you can't be. You're in the executive branch of government, you know, therefore you can't be.

This whole thing involved two very different human beings, Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, during an eight-year span at different periods, having the same responsibility and the same goals, objectives, whether it was called the New Frontier or the Great Society. But [they were] very different kinds of people.

Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself, but while I think of it, these meetings that I have described and these contacts that Jack Kennedy had, Jack Kennedy would not force the issue with a group of senators or congressmen or a mixed group in terms of securing their support. He would present his case, he would respond to questions, he'd engage in a vigorous exchange of views and all the rest, but he would stop short of sort of putting the finger on the fellow's chest and saying, "Are you with me? You've got to be with me," that sort of sales pitch. In that area, he didn't feel that degree of comfort or that "we're old buddies," you see. I mean, he knew them all, they all knew him, but he wasn't an intimate, really, of any of them in the final analysis. Maybe there were two or three congressmen or a couple of senators that he had close friendships with but it was there, he was the president of the United States and he had been junior among them, and it wasn't his nature, to use the vernacular, to put the arm on you directly, frontally. But he would vigorously present his views and his arguments.

Now, Lyndon Johnson in the same set of circumstances, the same kind of a grouping or meeting, would make an effort, before that meeting ended, to really get a complete, total commitment from the individual or individuals within a group. It was a difference in approach. But you see, both men recognized that within the time limits imposed upon them as president, that it was of overriding importance to try to get their program enacted. Sure, you have foreign policy, you have crises, you have all the rest, but this is integral to the whole activity and integral to establishing a record and making progress.

In both cases, with both men, I attended every cabinet meeting from day one with President Kennedy. The cabinet members sat at the cabinet table. Those of us [on the White House staff], the three or four or whatever it was that might be in there for a purpose as participants in the meeting, would sit along the wall. But the legislative program would be on the agenda every cabinet meeting, without fail. It would be on the formal agenda of the meeting. Therefore I would be a participant at that point in the meeting, in terms of discussing the progress, or lack of it, of the legislative program. When I became a member of the cabinet with President Johnson, it was a simple matter of moving from the wall to a seat at the table. But the item was still on the agenda--there was very little discussion of the Post Office Department in cabinet meetings--and when the item came up, I would handle the presentation.

There was another difference. I would report at the cabinet meeting as a noncabinet member, with President Kennedy, on progress or lack of progress. And Kennedy would allow comments [from] the appropriate members of the cabinet, naturally, as we discussed these matters. And that was it. With Lyndon Johnson, when my end of it would be completed, he would literally point the finger at the specific members of the cabinet, about lack of progress. And he would want to know, not from me, but from whoever it might be, why. And "When's the last time you saw the chairman of the committee?" "Have you been up on the Hill recently?" and, you know, all of that. That was another added dimension, just the approach to things of the two very different kinds of men.

Furthermore, at the leadership breakfasts, while Kennedy was content to have the full discussion of the legislative program and have Mike Mansfield and the Speaker and McCormack and whoever, or Humphrey, report on what they anticipated and when a bill might come up and what the committee progress looked like and all the rest of it, and you'd have a full-blown discussion, Lyndon Johnson wasn't satisfied with that. So we developed flow charts, and at each leadership breakfast somebody on the staff would get up there in the dining room and put those flow charts up on easels, show what progress had been made since the prior week, listing the legislation, having a big circular thing with a dial on it or whatever. Then everybody would have to turn to the flow chart and stare at it while the President wouldn't only verbalize this, but he would actually specify percentages of progress to date in terms of the overall program, what percentage of bills were out of committee, what percentage of bills had passed either house, either body, and so forth. So that was an additional refinement, which is a reflection on the man's approach to things.

G: How did the flow charts get started?

O: I don't remember. I think I had the Defense Department--we got some department to make these flow charts. I really don't know. I think it was my reaction to President Johnson, frankly, that he would be so specific. The general discussion, fine. But then he'd be so specific that it might be better to have flow charts. Well, flow charts, the first time we ever put them in the leadership breakfast, [it] startled the devil out of the leaders. Because they looked, and you were coming perilously close to where some leader might say, "Hey, wait a minute, I really don't work for you." (Laughter) "You're asking me all these questions, the man needs to know why the color hasn't changed or--"

G: That's incredible.

O: But that, anyway, is part of the role of the Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, in the legislative process and I think his personal perception regarding it, and the approach of both Presidents to the legislative process.

G: Fascinating. You mentioned that you went out to his house for dinner, and that you met

with him when you first got that job. What advice did he give you in terms of dealing with the Congress?

O: I think he refrained from any specific advice. There were two other couples present. One was Bobby Baker and his wife, and I must say--it was a Texas congressman and his wife. Jack Brooks. I didn't think after twenty-five years I'd recall who was at dinner that night, but I think I have it right.

The conversation after dinner really went along the lines of the struggle, the House situation, the Senate situation, the New Frontier program, the activities that we were jointly engaged in, and Bobby Baker's ability to contribute in terms of head counts and giving us counsel and up-to-date knowledge on what was transpiring. The Vice President--his office was up there and he was alert to everything and would continue to be, and the three of us would be in communication, along with Mike Mansfield, on a regular basis. And I don't recall that he ever said, "And here, A, B, C, D, is what you ought to contemplate doing." I think it was very general, but clearly, we're part of a very small team up in the Senate, the three of us along with Mike.

G: You've mentioned that he did participate in those meetings, but do you think he was utilized as much as he should have been on the Hill?

O: I don't know. I think he was kept advised of and privy to everything. He was kept abreast of what we might have determined was the current state of something, where the holes and the individual problems were, whether it was substantively with the legislation under consideration or with the member of the Senate or House that we were trying to persuade. He was privy to all of that. And I was not, frankly, other than I'll bet [on] a rare occasion--one I recall of asking him specifically--I didn't feel I was in a position to say to the Vice President of the United States, "Will you contact these five fellows?" On a couple of occasions it occurred, only in general conversation. My responsibility was to be sure that he was fully abreast of everything that was going on, and from that point on he would make his contribution to progress as he saw it. You know, you were not dealing around the table as with a cabinet member; you were dealing with the Vice President of the United States. Now, I would feel fairly comfortable--I would feel comfortable, I wouldn't say fairly--saying to John Gardner or Bob McNamara or anybody, "Here's what I think you ought to do, and you want to get back to that chairman and from what we've learned you've just got to--" you know, that kind of conversation, not arrogant or anything, but just sort of you're on an even keel, among equals, in a sense. But with the Vice President of the United States, it would not be seemly to say, "By the way, this is what I think you ought to do." He had all the facts, he had all the problems before him, he could make his own judgments on how he could be most effective.

G: You've covered a lot of ground here, and I want to ask you to go back in some detail on some of the various facets of your congressional relations job. First of all, let's talk a little bit more about the *Sequoia*. I would like for you to describe, if you will, a trip on it. You mentioned some of the elements of it, but tell me how you would describe an evening.

What did it entail?

O: Well, first of all, I'm not familiar with yachts, but the *Sequoia* to me was rather an impressive yacht, or boat or whatever you call it. I recognized it as a tool that was highly usable. By the same token, at least on the first few occasions, it was a pleasant experience. I think the crew was composed probably of about seven people. It would leave the dock promptly [at six o'clock], or as promptly as we could. Sometimes there was a delay of ten or fifteen minutes while one of our guests and his wife hadn't arrived, but we found that guests arrived promptly as a rule. It would be very unusual for it to have any undue delay. There was never a declination of an invitation that I can recall on it. Maybe a fellow had a conflict on a date and asked to be considered the next time out, but I don't recall anyone saying, "Oh, that's nice, but I'm not interested." This had not been a boat that members of Congress were used to being aboard.

The trip was carefully structured so that six o'clock was an appropriate departure time because an hour out you would probably be at the point where you would give a signal to start serving food. An hour and a half out, you were at Mount Vernon where this little recorded ceremony would take place with the flags flying, and [then] the boat would turn around.

The first hour, generally, was sitting around, roaming around, just small talk, and everyone with a drink of one sort or another. Occasionally we'd bring an accordion player aboard, so you might have a sing-along, depending on the nature of the group as you got a feel for them. And sometimes yes, sometimes no, maybe it was just the accordion player, or maybe you decided to tell the accordion player to take a long break because it wasn't that kind of a group.

But you tried to make everybody comfortable; it was a very pleasant boat to be on. It was roomy, and it had the two decks. Along about the end of the first hour, you had figured who you would like to chat with for a few minutes, to get things rolling. And you would make that effort. My wife would be visiting with the ladies, and I'd make the effort to have three or four individual or two or three-member group conversations to start to get the ball rolling on whatever I felt the subject or subjects should be. We would then try to build on that by enlisting more discussions or conversations which might wind up with six or eight members at the prow or somewhere having a chat. But not heavy, not heavy. I didn't envision one of those trips as a trip where I did a head count, that hopefully positions would be altered from what I perceived to be the positions of the various people on that boat before the trip started. I wanted to leave a good feeling. The follow-up would be with them in their office or elsewhere, so it was a trip not where any member would leave and say, "Gee, that damned trip, that O'Brien or some staff guy just was a pain in the neck."

G: You didn't try to exact a commitment out of them?

O: No, nothing like that.

G: Okay.

O: We'd talk about current events, current activities. You might switch it to baseball, and you might talk about any subject. And there'd be a little music playing, and then we had these little tables they could put up around. I think we could accommodate, for a buffet dinner, somewhere around thirty-four to thirty-six people fairly comfortably in the various parts of the boat.

Then after dinner, the last hour of the trip, you'd probably stay pretty much social, because then there was a blending of the members and their wives, all sort of mixed together in what was truly a social occasion. Very light touch. Really what you were building was if the member enjoyed the trip, that was going to make it, hopefully, a little easier to talk to him about substance in a week or two. It was all just part of the "let's maintain contact" activity.

Now, there would be times, however, as the boat approached the nine o'clock docking, where the conversations had taken a turn that I felt we ought to pursue it for another fifteen minutes or half-hour, at which time I would tell the captain not to dock. No one knew the difference. We'd just float out there and maybe dock at nine-thirty. The Captain would wait for my signal.

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G: Did the congressman ever ask to have important constituents included or was it strictly a--?

O: No. No, I don't recall that ever occurring. I think it was a recognition that it could be only a small group. It is sort of a White House invitation. I think there were a few occasions when a congressman would say, "Can I bring my daughter? My wife is back home," or something like that, but not to extend it beyond their own invitation.

G: How about important supporters of the President, say, members of the President's Club or something like this?

O: None.

G: It was strictly congressional, or legislative?

O: Yes. Yes.

G: I see.

O: I never contemplated extending it because--maybe I was wrong, I don't know--it seemed to me, first of all, this was government property. I'm sure that we on the staff never

considered bringing anybody but the members of Congress aboard.

- G: In your own mind, as you look back over that span of years, can you recall specific occasions where you think that ride on the *Sequoia* might have made a member more favorably disposed toward a bill?
- O: I'm afraid I can't. I'll tell you what we derived from this, too, perhaps, that was very helpful, was discussion with a senator or congressman involved by committee assignment in the same legislative struggle. And to have exchanges of views, senator and congressman, relating to the Senate or the House, or their individual perceptions of the Senate or the House, or a senator's perception of the House or vice versa, while you listened in on it, was helpful. I think, frankly, conversations took place on that boat between houses in terms of those members that otherwise probably never would have taken place, and maybe understandings, not formal understandings, but better understanding of the relative views occurred. Now, that could have occurred up in the hallway on any given day, but many of these members, interestingly enough--it was like the media and the members at those brunches--the sort of void between the two bodies in terms of regular communication was interesting to me. Because you would have, once you got the discussions going, exchanges of views that clearly, as I recall them, were evidence that they hadn't discussed this before somehow, or they hadn't really had any in-depth discussion, if in-depth meant five or ten minutes on a boat.
- G: Was it an educational process for you yourself, finding out--?
- O: Yes. Oh, I think I got a feel of--as I say, no one was ever solicited to make a commitment on the boat. But I must say that there were nights that I left the *Sequoia* having probably a little different view of a member's attitude toward something than I otherwise would have had or that I previously had, that I didn't have it figured right.
- G: Were there ever any problems, either mechanical problems--I mean, did the boat ever break down or did you ever run aground or did you ever have problems with people getting sick or anything like that?
- O: No. None of those problems that I can recall. Nor did I ever have an occasion, with all of that activity, where you might have had a problem of having somebody leave the boat in some disrepair. (Laughter)
- G: Prematurely either. Well, now LBJ used it quite a bit, particularly toward the end of his presidency.
- O: Yes.
- G: Were you still able to use it as frequently under Johnson?
- O: Yes, I think that under Johnson, as time went on, there probably wasn't as frequent use--I

don't have any copies of logs or anything--for a couple of reasons: one, he used it more often than Kennedy. Kennedy, incidentally, would use the smaller boat quite often. Secondly, the Great Society program was going like gangbusters and a great deal of your time and attention was devoted to the flow. It was moving so rapidly that it wasn't so much solicitation but working on the mechanics of getting committee activities through, and there was a great willingness to enact the program and a great effort expended. And we had some elbow room, to use a phrase, in the House after the 1964 election that afforded us some degree of comfort. It certainly didn't relax us but, my gosh, at least you had a reasonable break there in that tenuous situation that occurred on every major roll call during the early years.

G: Let me ask you about another form of transportation, and that's travel on *Air Force One* and use of presidential jets. Did you utilize this as a way to have contact with congressmen and senators, to get credit--?

O: More apt to use it as a way of recognizing them. Let's cite an example. If you're going to use *Air Force One* and you're going to Illinois, in the course of the day, on the ground you're going to be in two or three congressional districts and probably two or three nearby congressional districts and you have two senators. You're apt to just focus on that. The accompanying legislative party would be the people that appropriately represent the areas, the state or locality that you're going to. There probably were occasions when you--well, for example, if you were going to view a military display, a carrier, I remember an occasion like that, or going to a dedication of a major dam or waterway of some sort, in addition to the obvious members that would be involved, if it were on the carrier you're really then focusing on committees. If it were with Wilbur Mills and [John] McClellan and those people in Arkansas to dedicate a public works project, included also would be appropriate members, bipartisanly, of the committees that were involved in the consideration and ultimate enactment of the legislation that brought about the project. It was a very sensitive area, and you wanted to be very, very careful to not make a mistake.

G: How could you do that?

O: Well, that you didn't overlook some fellow that rightly belonged--and you know, it was brought to my attention in a little conversation I had with an old friend that I visited the couple of days I spent in Washington a few weeks ago, Jake Pickle. It's interesting, because with all of our effort to do things right and cover every base and ensure that proper recognition was forthcoming at all times, Jake started to chat with me about my time as postmaster general. I was sworn in as postmaster general in a little town called Hye, Texas, near the [LBJ] Ranch. And Jake went over to his desk--we were sitting near it--and he had this pretty, nicely-bound book, which was really a little thumbnail history of every post office in this district that for some purpose at one time he had distributed. And on the cover is a picture of my swearing in, because it was [in his district].

We were sitting around and talking about how that was typical of Lyndon, you know, that he'd think of going to Hye, Texas. And I got into reminiscing with Jake about

Lyndon telling me about--the name eludes me at the moment [Levi Deike]--the postmaster in this little combination grocery store and post office in Hye, Texas, how this fellow was one of nine brothers and they had a baseball team and Lyndon as a young fellow was on a baseball team that played their team and they were competitors, and how finally then, I assume, Congressman Johnson probably had an opportunity to name a postmaster in Hye, Texas and how he named this fellow postmaster, and here he is, he's still there. This was a place where he mailed his first letter, and he used to love to come in as a young fellow when this fellow had this barrel cheese and you'd take this knife or scoop and take a piece of cheese and how he was looking forward now to going through this as part of the little ceremony, that out on the porch I'm going to be sworn in and the press, they were already out there. It was all lovely.

This was going on in the motorcade getting to Hye, Texas, to the post office. So I was sitting with the President in his car, and we get out, and there's the postmaster standing on the porch along with the group to greet him. So the first thing, Johnson introduced me to him. He said, "Here's your new boss," you know, typical of the way the President would [talk]. He said, "Now, tell him who made you postmaster here." And the fellow said, "Jim Farley."

(Laughter)

It was unbelievable. You could not have written a script. (Laughter) The President looked at him, he said, "Well, it was great seeing you. Well now, let's go in and get some of that good cheese." There wasn't any good cheese in there; there was all that packaged [cheese]. (Laughter) And the President's trying to open up a package. Well, anyway, Jake and I were going through this, chuckling away.

Jake says, "Look at that picture again." [Homer] Thornberry had been the judge by then, I guess, that swore me in, and there's various people in the picture. No Jake Pickle. Well, I don't think I ever knew or it ever penetrated with me. Jake said, "I was never so mad in my life. I wasn't invited! And it's in my congressional district!" And he said, "I got the word to him. He called me for two weeks; I wouldn't take his phone calls. I finally got over it, but I was bitter. That guy there was in the middle of my district. It was one of the biggest things that's ever happened in that area. You're swearing in a cabinet member. He's the president of the United States and, Christ, you don't invite the congressman!" And I thought to myself, boy, no matter how much effort you make, as we're talking about *Air Force One* and the *Sequoia* and trying to keep all of this in some degree of balance and trying to avoid or at least minimize the number of mistakes you make or the number of hurt feelings that you create and all the rest of it, obviously you don't get it all done by any means, but you try mightily to do it.

But there was a great overriding sensitivity, and logically so, rightly so, to this whole area of recognition on the part of the White House. It was overriding. Talk about utilization, what did we have to utilize? The advance notices I've talked about and all the other things. And you keep looking for other ways of having this continuity of contact,

this little bit of service that can be rendered.

And we went to the White House tours. I remember it because there was a Republican holdover that was the tour director or something, and he was the brother of a famous general who was the military aide to Eisenhower. I forget his name now, a nice man. And somebody said, "Gee, you ought to throw him out." We hesitated to do that and didn't do that. He had been around there for years and it was sort of a career for him, so we put another fellow in with him, a friend, so that we would be sure that everything went right. And you know, it was an important matter for a member of Congress that he would have a group coming in or individuals that were very important in his district or state, and one of the things they liked to do while they're in Washington is visit the White House. They had an alternative: they could get in a long line that went for blocks and visit the White House, or you could have the VIP tour, which was a tour that was not a formalized thing but could be arranged in the morning. Well, we were very sensitive to that, very attentive to it, and God knows how many VIP tours we put together, groups from two to fifty. That was very important. If a congressman or senator couldn't get these important constituents, and I never knew of an occasion where they overdid it, say, "Well, I've got seven hundred people," that sort of thing. These were people that really were important to him politically, and he'd be careful because that was all logged, that was part of our record on contact with them. But we found that was very important. Now, that's a minuscule, minor thing in a sense, isn't it? But for that fellow to say to Jack Smith and his wife and their friends or whatever, "I've arranged something for you that nobody else has."

So there again, we had no hesitancy, very frankly, when the fellow who was not supportive at all called for a VIP tour, to tell him sorry, but we don't have the space that morning.

G: Was there a genuine space problem with those tours?

O: No.

G: You didn't have a scheduling problem at all?

O: No.

G: Even at a late date you could squeeze somebody in if you--?

O: Always arranged to do it. Now, another aspect of it, too, what else is there? There are also invitations to the White House dinners and important functions.

G: Were these to congressmen themselves rather than to their constituents?

O: Well, yes. I didn't get into that. I would get slightly into the big contributor list because I had a knowledge of it from my--

G: The campaign?

O: The campaign. But really what would happen over at the other wing was there would be an allocation, not just hard-bitten, but [from] Bess Abell and the people that were working on this. I would submit a list of a dozen, or a list of eight or ten, to these functions. No, we were allowed to fit in some--say, what would the accommodation be, seventy couples, a hundred and forty people, whatever those functions are--ten or twelve of our folks there.

G: Did this element of congressional liaison, the White House dinners, change from Kennedy to Johnson?

O: I don't recall it did.

G: Let me ask you again about travel. How about the use of the smaller planes, the Jetstars? Did congressmen and senators want to be able to use those for travel and [inaudible]?

O: Yes. There was travel. That was handled really on the Hill.

G: Really?

O: Yes. They would go to the leadership and the leadership would make the request of the Defense Department. There were occasions, I suppose, when we were involved, but normally these were--we had an example that was highly publicized recently, didn't we, of a fellow going to South America or somewhere, and it turned out he was the only member on the plane and the Speaker had submitted the request and listed half a dozen members. I don't know.

G: Did you ever use air transportation to get members back for a vote where you really needed them to be there?

O: Yes.

G: Can you describe any of these?

O: I don't remember the specific votes. It was more apt that we did it. No question about it. I can't with specificity detail times it occurred, because what strikes me the minute you asked me that was a sort of an en masse return, crisis returns, where members might have been back home or there was a break in the sessions. I think the Cuban missile crisis is an example where we had to just fan out planes across the country to get the appropriate members bipartisanly back for briefings. But there were times when we quietly got plane transportation from an air base or something for a fellow to get back to vote.

G: Would that generally go through your office or would that go through--?

- O: Well, yes, that would, or through Mike Mansfield because we would note that, "Well, gee, this fellow can't make it. He's got a speaking engagement. If we could only figure out some way on transportation we could get him back in time for the vote. Otherwise commercially he can't." That sort of [thing]. It was rare, but there were times.
- G: Now, you had, in addition, Camp David and I guess later the LBJ Ranch, earlier Hyannis Port and maybe the Florida [compound at] Palm Beach. Did President Kennedy and President Johnson use these other residences to entertain congressmen and senators, to lobby them?
- O: No. No.
- G: Did you ever use Camp David for that purpose?
- O: No. I went to Camp David because we were authorized to use it, so I was there a number of times, but never with any members of Congress. No. The homes or residences of the presidents were never taken into account. If President Johnson had members of Congress down to the Ranch that was his own doing and for his own reasons and purpose. It had nothing to do with me at all.
- G: But did you see him using this as a lobbying device?
- O: No, I don't think so. I doubt it. I can remember being down there on a couple of occasions at the Ranch. There might have been a couple of old Senate friends there or something. I don't think that--if he did, I wasn't aware of it.
- G: Another element--of course, there are all kinds of appointments, but I'm thinking particularly here of administrative appointments to regulatory agencies. For example, some have suggested that this was a way to get Dirksen's cooperation so often; if you would give him a certain percentage of minority appointments to the federal regulatory commissions that he would play ball more.
- O: Well, if that actually took place, it took place between Dirksen and the President.
- G: Really?
- O: Yes. I would relay to the President requests of that nature. It would be a judgment that would be made solely by him. If you were at a level of appointment that was presidential and, again, at a high enough level that invariably you had recommendations, suggestions, from various sources, and if President Johnson had a particular arrangement with Ev Dirksen, I was not involved in it. Where we were engaged was [in appointments in the departments], but we gave up the process after a while and I notice each president and their staff seems to reach [that stage]. In the early Kennedy days we would [have], as I told you, these initial meetings with the cabinet members where it was made clear to them that all appointments at the top probably four levels or five levels emanated from the

White House. That was all fine and that was all understood, but in no time at all you had a significant stack of folders of open appointments. We then would have a weekly meeting in my office that would include Ralph Dungan, Ken O'Donnell, Dick Maguire and me. I think there were four of us, but definitely Dungan and O'Donnell. And we'd take it on a case-by-case basis, each opening. Well, heck, our idea was to get rid of everybody that we felt didn't belong, and that would get you to a fifth level a lot of times. They were all schedule "C" appointments or presidential appointments, and we insisted up front, as I suspect probably every administration does and some undoubtedly have been more successful than I think we were, that there were two motivations. One, obviously, was these were significant patronage appointments. And secondly, we were intent that we were going to have our own team across government.

Well, invariably in those folders there would be a folder, assistant secretary of commerce or even below that, whatever the title is, in commerce. And you'd have letters of recommendation along with outside letters of recommendation or political considerations, recommendations from members of Congress for constituent appointment. And you'd make an ultimate determination. You'd weigh it politically and certainly you'd weigh it in terms of competency and qualification, and that was first. Then if you got to that and say, well, this fellow is qualified; he'd stand the test, then you'd go to those who were supporting him, sometimes no one, if he was a thought of our own. And I'll have to tell you that we probably engaged in that for a number of months and [on] rather a formal basis, a weekly meeting, Friday afternoon. Hopefully we'd have a little spare time we could put to this. And if you had thirty or forty folders, the meeting would terminate and you still had twenty-eight folders, because you just didn't have all the necessary information and elements in place to make a judgment. And if it was a presidential appointment, it was going to be referred to the Oval Office, and if there was some political gain out of it, that obviously would have to be carefully structured.

Also, you had the unfortunate aspect of all of this that if you were going to make a decision and it had a political element in it, there were probably four or five people, or maybe eight or ten people who were going to be grievously disappointed. That also had to be considered in the political context. What we tried to work out oftentimes was--if not top or even top three level of presidential appointments but a lot of these appointments or openings were involved--that if it was a disappointment to someone, John Bailey, who was national chairman of the Democratic Party, would notify the person that we're sorry but it didn't work out. If it was the favorable side of it, obviously depending on the importance of it, the President would notify the fellow directly or we would notify the member on behalf of the President. Then sometimes it was somewhat routine.

All of that, in terms of its impact, very honestly, on the legislative program, in my judgment after my experience, is minimal. I think it's grossly exaggerated. It may be because of the way we went about it, but I can tell you that we drifted away from it. I can't honestly tell you today whether that process with that little committee--probably self-anointed, I don't know--terminated in any formalized sense. I think we just got sick of it. You had other things to do and you weren't accomplishing much. From Friday to

Friday there was no real input, and really what it came to is making sure you didn't cause some political problems if they could be avoided.

It all added up to--there were two things happened. For example, the experience I had one time. We were not satisfied with what we perceived the degree of cooperation to be in the Defense Department. And it went to a level that was important to us, but yet it wasn't overriding. This wasn't the President and Bob McNamara. But I talked to the President about it and decided that while McNamara--[where] this activity would come directly to his attention, it worked smoothly. And McNamara in no way was trying to put people in place over there that rightly should be decided by the White House. But perhaps in the branches it wasn't quite that well understood.

So it was decided I would call the three secretaries in individually--air force, navy and army--and I did. And one was John Connally--there was no better pro around. I had John in. John said, "If you ever run into a problem involving my outfit, just get to me directly because I won't tolerate [it]. I know this has got to be done professionally." Great. We talked about other things.

My recollection is the army and air force secretaries needed a little advice. It was just a matter of saying, "Hey, fellows, keep an eye on things." But one of them gave me a lecture--he was our appointee--to the effect that I had to recognize, and, consequently, the President would have to recognize that his outfit is in place today, had been in place for years, and will be there long after we're gone. And that he wasn't about to be involved in any activities that could be construed as politics. I told him I appreciated his views and we said goodbye and I reported to the President. He wasn't there long.

Now that sounds harsh and very political. It was very political, but not harsh. Because what happens is a president, a new administration, never gets a handle on the bureaucracy. That fellow in a sense was right; he applied it to his own department. But that is an attitude throughout the bureaucracy. "Listen, Ike Eisenhower is over there, Richard Nixon is there, Gerry Ford is there, Jimmy Carter is there, Lyndon Johnson is there, Jack Kennedy is there, I'm still here and I've got certain rights and I don't have to implement the policies of the current administration. I was here before they came and I'll be here after they're gone. I'm not in the political arena; I'm a public servant."

You recognize, at the outset, the overriding importance that your policies and views be the views and policies of the entire executive branch of government. It's got to be one policy, and there's one boss, there's one leader, and he's been elected by the people. And you must be sure to dismiss where necessary, make adjustments where necessary, and make replacements appropriately. So there's a bit of political involvement, too, because you're going to be recognizing people that you feel you owe something to. In some instances you're not. But, overridingly, you want those people in every department and agency at top levels that have any meaningful decision-making to be in tune with the president and the White House. And I'm here to tell you that every administration has approached it in this manner. In all candor, some of it has to do with patronage, where

you have all these nice jobs and, after all, they belong to you, or your people ought to be in them. But set that aside. Overridingly, how can you function if you don't have enthusiastic support for your leadership across the executive branch? And you're never going to accomplish it.

I haven't had a conversation like this with people in other administrations that might have been in comparable positions. Indeed, obviously, I haven't had such a conversation with any former presidents. But my guess is that every new administration entering the White House has that in mind and feels it's a top priority--a first order of business and assumes that it can be done, in an orderly fashion, rather quickly--to have your whole team, at all the appropriate levels, in place across the board. Then after a few months, either you have a small army that does nothing else but monitor that activity, or it slips away and you go on about your business, your paramount assignment.

Now I'll guess again. My guess is that the Reagan Administration has been more effective in accomplishing this than perhaps any administration in my time. And I say that because I have the feeling that there is an assigned group, clandestine if you will, that focuses solely on that aspect of government and that they have done it in a very systematic and professional manner. That's my guess. But I'm equally sure that short of that, having people--intimate staff, people close to you, a president--undertake this effort is doomed to fail. Maybe no harm has really been done, but it is not going to succeed as you envisioned it.

G: Let me ask you about the congressional liaison representatives from the departments. Did you select those people or were they people selected by the cabinet officers?

O: As we initiated this and I mentioned these approximately forty people across government that I considered part of our liaison process, I would say the vast majority of them were already in place and had been selected by the cabinet member with our approval. They would generally be at the assistant secretary level. Our concern, very frankly, was to upgrade their position in the table of organization because I was taken aback when we finally got to who they were and where they were in the table of organization, how closely they related and worked with the department head, and what their depth of competency was and all the rest. I found--and this was historic--that in some cases they were relatively low-level people that had little or no contact with the department head. Some worked under some assistant secretary and really didn't have the close, ongoing relationship that we felt was essential, because of our perception of the role of the cabinet member in the legislative process. And we were successful in a number of instances in upgrading to a higher level. But it was a problem. But as time went on and replacements occurred over the eight-year period, the level was raised in most instances and the quality was raised, because it had been built into the system by then. And you can't be a cabinet member trying to account for what hasn't gone right and go back to your office and say, "Gee, what's the name of the fellow that's the congressional relations guy here?" You'd better by that time have had enough sense to say, "Boy, I've upgraded and have the best man available and he lives with me!"

G: Was there a problem of getting these people to reflect the White House view as well as the view of their particular department?

O: Not really, because the White House staff, as small as it was, was involved directly with them. Say you had a farm bill and Orville Freeman is working arduously with his people to promote that farm bill, and it's difficult. Orville knew that we not only shared his concern, we were direct participants. We were working together; we were head counting and they were working with us each step of the way--subcommittee, committee, to the floor. We were intimately involved at each step. We would expect, therefore, that Orville and his people, when the time came and it was the foreign aid bill or minimum wage or whatever, would respond because of their close relationship with members of the Congress who were on the Agriculture Committee and would pitch in with us in an across-the-board effort to promote that legislation. So Orville Freeman and the others knew that the President was totally alert to progress or lack of it, that there was a full commitment--it was part of the Great Society program or the New Frontier program. But beyond that, he could look for help wherever it could be found from other departments and agencies who recognized they had a responsibility to Orville. He in turn would be helpful, when his time came, with the members of the Congress that he had an intimate relationship with. So you tried not to overlook any possibility of contact, any possibility of an inch gained in getting that vote.

Therefore, I don't think at any time that we could quarrel about the attitude of the team. For example, when I sat in the White House and spent three or four hours every week or two with the forty people and the White House staff, I'd conduct the meeting and we'd review every major legislative item. Now, everybody is involved in the effort. They're all listening; they're all part of it, they're all taking notes. So when it got to agriculture, for example, I would say, "Okay, let's get on to this," and everyone knew that whatever contribution they could make to the overall effort was not only expected, it was demanded.

G: Let's get back to the congressional side of the appointment process. I just assumed that congressmen and senators were much more interested in judgeships than they were other types of appointments. Is this correct?

O: That was very important and a lot of judgeships came about during those years. There were increases in the number of judgeships, along with the normal attrition.

G: Sure. Well, you had fifty new judgeships here in 1961, so. . . .

O: Yes. There would be the political input, and my role would be to make known congressional interest as it was brought to my attention. The ultimate discussions regarding that would be between Bobby and the President. They would have a full awareness of the political repercussions.

G: Did congressmen or senators ever withhold a needed vote on something or bottle up a bill until they got some sort of guarantee that their man would be appointed?

O: I can't recall a specific instance; it might have occurred. Regarding judgeships, it might have occurred. Those were important appointments.

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O: --a humorous aspect to it. There was a congressman named Mike Kirwan in the House that was a very interesting fellow--had an interesting background. He had the seniority to be chairman of a subcommittee of Appropriations. He had a favorite phrase: "You get the point I mean?" That was repeated often by Mike, who I thought the world of, got along very well with. But Mike had one hang-up in life; he wanted to build an aquarium in Washington. I never knew and I don't know to this day just what motivated him--whether he was just a lover of fish or what.

Senator Wayne Morse made a speech out in Oregon, talking about public works projects of much significance to the state of Oregon that were in progress through the Congress. For some reason he chose to mention Mike Kirwan and his aquarium and how ridiculous it was. Well, somebody took the occasion to call it to Mike's attention that he had been ridiculed by Wayne Morse publicly and Mike Kirwan immediately took steps to block about three, as I recall it, significant Oregon projects in this committee. Wayne Morse had learned of that and became hysterical. We were depending on Wayne Morse in the area of education and he was most important at that time.

Well, Wayne tried to apologize to Mike. It meant nothing and, knowing Mike as I did, I knew that once he established his position, you had a case on your hands. Wayne Morse brought his problem to our attention and placed it on the President's desk. So we had to get to Mike, and the President agreed to sign the bill establishing an aquarium that Mike would get passed. Well, you can well imagine the President. He couldn't think of one reason in the world to sign a bill of that nature, but he did come up with the one reason. We assured Mike that he had our full cooperation on the aquarium.

Mike, in turn, after some more considerable thought--he left Wayne Morse hang around for quite a while--allowed as though he was going to release his hold, which he did, on the projects. Then the aquarium bill came down and I called Mike and said, "I'm pleased to tell you, Mike, as we discussed many times, the President is signing your aquarium bill." I thought it would be a simple thank you, "thanks for letting me know," but no, Mike said, "When is he going to sign the aquarium bill?" I said, "Well, I'll have to check," because that wouldn't call for a signing ceremony. He said, "I want to be there."

So we established the time for the President to sign the aquarium bill. Mike was there to look over his shoulder to ensure that he signed it and have a picture taken by the White House photographer. We did avoid a public display, however, but that resolved Wayne Morse's problem and resolved a problem placed on our desk. Of course, the

aquarium never was built. I cite this because it involved two very interesting and unusual characters, Wayne Morse and Mike Kirwan.

But it's amazing what you could run into. I don't know about somebody saying, "I refuse to vote for this unless my man is appointed judge." I would think in most instances his man, if he met the qualifications of the bar association and was truly qualified, the appointment went forward.

We had this foreign aid struggle, which was apparently a struggle that every president had engaged in from the time Congressman Otto Passman had control of the foreign aid bill. We ran into trouble, all kinds of trouble with Passman, and we found we ran into trouble with a fellow by the name of [D. B.] Saund, who was a congressman from California. That trouble arose because a VA hospital in his district was among those on a list to be closed, and rightly so. In fact, it was a fire hazard. But Saund was totally upset. He made it loud and clear that he'd do everything he could to oppose the legislation. We didn't have much of an alternative but to ride it out, but there was just an interesting little side bar to it. Saund had sent us a large, beautifully framed photograph that had been taken of the President and his grandson, I believe, for a presidential autograph, and it came to me. So Phyllis hid the photograph and Saund started to inquire about it. And we played out the string with Saund about "we'll look it up," and "sorry for the delay," and this went on and on and on and the photograph wasn't forthcoming. Saund became very disturbed but it wasn't really doing much for us. It was Phyllis' idea and I played along with it. Finally we released the photograph, but we let Saund stay upset for two or three months. It gave us maybe a little bit of personal satisfaction, but it wasn't a significant contribution to altering the situation.

I'm trying to think back, but it would be pretty blatant and you might have your suspicions regarding a fellow's position on a legislative proposal. You might feel that perhaps he would foot-drag or maybe we'd have a problem with him because he wasn't going to get what he wanted, whether it was a project or an appointment. But, frankly, I don't remember an incident. Whenever it was reasonable and feasible, you'd accommodate a member.

G: With the southerners on the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, did you have trouble getting liberal judges and black judges cleared?

O: Yes, to some extent. Again, I can't be specific. I wish I could go back into the files that might reveal some of this, but it was difficult because we often compromised. We often felt that we would have much preferred to have a more liberal appointee or a black appointee, and there were times when we were stymied. More and more, as time went on, there was stronger inclination on the part of the southerners to go in our direction. So to some extent, belatedly perhaps, too slowly, it came about, and to some extent at least it adjusted itself.

Again, I don't know of a situation when an appointment or a project became such a

direct confrontation that you totally capitulated to avoid the loss of a meaningful bill. I don't know of one that ever occurred in that context. Now, there may have been nuances of that, but it would not be good sense or good judgment really on the part of a congressman or a senator to take a stand that might become public on something like that. See, he'd have to be very, very careful to avoid that, and there's always tomorrow. What I found, even in despair or disappointment was that a member had the capacity to recognize there's always tomorrow. It is quite a decision to make on the part of a member of Congress to cut his ties, no matter how tenuous he might feel they are at the moment, or how disappointed he might be. It is, first of all, extremely poor judgment. Secondly, it makes no political sense, and thirdly, you have to assume he is reasonably realistic as he is a political animal. Consequently, that White House remains awesome at all times, and there is always tomorrow. You don't want to be in a position where you can't pick up that phone.

G: Well, did you have a formula for naming Republican members of boards that required a certain split in Democrats and Republicans?

O: Yes, we always looked for friendly Republicans or nonaligned.

G: Did you?

O: Yes. Where the law compels you to have a political balance on a board or commission, obviously you sought--

G: Well, you had some Republicans in the cabinet, too.

O: Sure.

G: Okay. What about the problem of closing military installations and VA hospitals? You mentioned the one example. Was there a legislative relations element here? Did you have any flexibility, first of all? Could you leave something open--?

O: We did, but you tried to move forward in those areas with some hope of some degree of success. Perhaps it would be piecemeal. But projects to a great extent are beyond the control of a president; they are often negotiated on the Hill. Until there is such a thing as an item veto, it will always be thus. The Christmas tree at the end of each session will be appropriately decorated. I sound like a cynic and I am in that regard. Unfortunately, I don't see an answer to all of that. I share Reagan's view regarding item vetoes. I think it's senseless the way this process is conducted. VA hospitals, I guess, are a good example. In the normal course of things, VA hospitals in some instances became archaic. They were underused. So were air bases, et cetera, and certainly I would never suggest that the maximum effort not be made to act in those areas.

But I remember one situation during the President Johnson period. I paid my usual visit to Mike Mansfield one morning for a cup of coffee. Mike was a pipe smoker,

and he clenched the pipe in his teeth. I didn't discern at first blush that Mike seemed to be even more reticent than was normally the case. We had become very close friends and had a very pleasant relationship. I went into the inner room and his fellow poured the coffee, and Mike said, "Okay," gritting his teeth, "explain it to me." It was my good luck I didn't know what he was talking about, and I didn't. One thing led to another. He said, "The closing of that hospital." I still was at a loss. And the conversation went on.

It turned out that Ramsey Clark, who was on the White House staff at some point, had been designated by President Johnson to look into waste, and Ramsey had come up with a list of VA hospitals that should be closed. Apparently, the announcement of the closings was made and then Mansfield was visited by somebody to inform him that a VA hospital in his state was being closed. Mansfield had had no prior contact, there had been no discussion with him, and Mike made it clear to me that this was intolerable. I must say, I was sitting with a very angered majority leader. I frankly didn't know, so I called the White House in Mike's presence to be informed. The mistake had been compounded by not even telling the congressional relations office in the White House about this. At least that relieved me somewhat in terms of my personal relationship with Mike, because Mike finally was convinced that I didn't know and that he had hit me with something that I was completely unaware of.

So then the story unfolded. The President [decided that] despite Mike's ardent support of the Great Society program and his position in the Senate, he could not be made an exception and there was no way that that hospital was not going to be closed. The task of the White House was to put together a team immediately to start publicizing the plus factors of closing these installations, including Mike's. We were going to undertake a media effort on this. So people were assigned all over the place to contact press and issue releases. This got to the boiling point, and so the House Veterans Affairs Committee decided to have hearings on the closing of the VA hospitals. And lo and behold, the Majority Leader of the Senate arrived to testify at the hearing in the House. (Laughter)

And this went on. We had one of our regular meetings of the congressional relations people, and the President would periodically drop in to give a pep talk or sit in and listen to the deliberations. But he stopped in this night and lectured everybody in the room on the need to close these hospitals, that this was intolerable, and he was going to bring some discipline, some cost savings to this bureaucracy. Mike Mansfield was not at all persuaded; if anything, he had become more adamant. And the end result was that Mike's hospital was not closed, and I don't believe the program went forward to finalization. I'd have to check the records on that.

But it's an example, I think, of how you may become stymied. You might be well motivated, as Ramsey was, and the President receiving his report was enthusiastic. Ramsey had found an area of cost savings, and he was right. But it's difficult.

It reminds me of a conversation that President Kennedy had with Al Thomas. Al Thomas came in to see me one day and he, by that time, had become a very helpful senior

member of Congress in terms of moving our program. We owed him a lot. He said they were going to have a testimonial for him in Houston, [honoring his] years in Congress. He allowed as though he'd be highly honored if the President would consider appearing. I, as Mike Kirwan used to say, got the point he meant, and when we finished the discussion I told him I would check it out and get back to him. I thought, he's here in the White House, why don't I just pick up my phone to the President and see if he's available and have Al drop by and say hello. So that happened and [they] chatted. I advised the President of Al's request and the President said that he would certainly take it into consideration and see if something could be worked out.

But in the course of the chat--and Kennedy was awfully good at this sort of thing--something was said about the Hill and Jack said to Al, "Al, God, they think I've got a lot of power down here, everything going for me. You know that isn't the case. You know it's very difficult. But you know also I'm from Massachusetts, and I keep my eye on that state. I want my state to get its fair share of any goodies that emanate from the Hill. Now, you know, Al, that you can do a lot for my state now." (Laughter) And he was right. In that context there is a lot of power wielded on the Hill and it comes to the Christmas tree and it comes to the process. A well-placed member of Congress, House or Senate or both, or a well-placed group of members can get an awful lot done by way of expending federal funds for "meaningful activities" that a president can't get done.

- G: Is it fair to say that you would be much more reluctant to close a hospital or a military installation in Carl Hayden's state than you would, say, in H. R. Gross' district or something like that?
- O: Oh, sure. You mentioned H. R. Gross. Now I may be unfair to him, but I don't recall him in support of any proposals of ours, even indirectly. In fact, he would go to the ends of the earth to register his opposition in every conceivable way, often using parliamentary procedure. I would say if there was a VA hospital in Gross' district on that list, not only would Gross not receive the courtesy of advance notice of its being closed, he wouldn't receive the courtesy of discussing it after the fact. But fortunately there weren't that number of H. R. Grosses up there.
- G: Of course, Gross was not only negative but he was relatively powerless, I guess, particularly contrasted with someone like Hayden.
- O: Yes, he was. But you see, "there's always tomorrow" thinking manifested itself most significantly to me in an incident that occurred that involved the civil rights bill. If you needed to recall a lesson, an occurrence such as this does it forcibly. We were desperate, regarding the House Judiciary Committee, in an effort to secure a civil rights bill of some meaning from that committee to try to get it into legislative discussion and enactment. And we were stymied. Nick Katzenbach was deeply involved, and others in Justice. We were all involved in this.

You had a situation on the committee where southern Democrats were opposed to

any civil rights legislation. Republicans were disinterested. Non-southern Democrats, liberal Democrats, wanted a much stronger civil rights bill than we were trying to spring from the committee. Manny [Emanuel] Celler, the chairman, was being cooperative, realistic, trying to get a decent bill out of there. McCulloch of Ohio, the senior Republican, was very much involved and very positive in his efforts.

So now you have a situation where there's sort of a three-way split. There was a liberal congressman from Chicago who on a preliminary vote had voted against the bill on the basis that it just didn't do the job as he saw it. He went back to Chicago for his weekends and he'd go on interview programs proclaiming to the heavens how he was going to block any civil rights bill that wasn't total as he saw it. I contacted Dick Daley, who obviously had named the congressman--you don't get elected, you got named out there in Daley's time--and explained to the Mayor what the situation was. The Mayor said he certainly was not going to tolerate that and would speak to him directly. The fellow chose to defy the Mayor, or continued to talk that way and would not cooperate. I must say after a few months, he announced he wouldn't be seeking re-election.

While that was going on and we were endeavoring in every way to build a majority vote in that committee, desperation led us to, I guess, our old friend Charlie Halleck, the minority leader. So I had Charlie Halleck down to the White House, and the President explained his dilemma, asked Charlie if he could see his way clear to be of some help, and assured him it would be deeply appreciated. Charlie, to our great surprise, said, by gosh, he thought he could help and would. He set a time to report back his findings; [that] is the way he put it. He said, "I'll go back and check individually with my fellows"--the Republicans on the committee--"and see what I come up with."

The time came, and we were on tenterhooks waiting to hear from Charlie. I was in the Oval Office, and I guess it was by noontime three days later [that he was to report]. Whatever it was, the time came and went, and the call didn't come from Charlie. Half an hour or more went by and as you have to carry this to the last inch, the President called Charlie to determine why he hadn't heard from him. Charlie apologized. He said, "I had delayed the call because I had another contact I wanted to make, but I think I've been able to be helpful," and he specified that there would be a few additional Republican votes in support of this compromise civil rights bill. Charlie Halleck made a most significant contribution to getting that bill sprung from the committee. One congressman lost his seat in Congress because of his position. The point of the story is, there is always tomorrow, and who knows when the time might come when a member up there might help, even though you're poles apart.

And with Halleck, I liked him, and Halleck was a fellow that enjoyed what Sam Rayburn used to call the Board of Education. So we'd get to a confrontation on the floor and Charlie would grab me shortly before the vote, when you're getting to D-day, and Charlie would say, "O'Toole"--and I don't know to this day why he called me O'Toole, but that was his nickname for me for some reason or other--"got you this time." I'd say, "I don't think so." And this kind of conversation would take place. I'd say, "No, I think we'll

win by twelve." "No, you're going to lose by seven." I said, "Okay, right after the vote we'll have a drink together." "Okay." And we'd beat them every time. And we'd have the drink together down in the recess of the Capitol. Charlie would say, "O'Toole, I'll get you the next time." It was that kind of a relationship. You understood that Charlie was never going to give you a vote; Charlie's job was to block everything he could possibly block. Gerry Ford, who succeeded him as minority leader, wasn't a Charlie Halleck in that sense. He wasn't any more cooperative, but the relationship was a little easier and not as confrontational. And maybe there was a time when Gerry tolerated us getting something done that he might have been able to stop, you know, a vote here or there.

But the only point of it all is that you never foreclosed the possibility, and when you talk about a legislative record, sure, you can do it statistically--and I did; I tried to put the best public relations front on it I could. But deeply and sincerely, in those first couple of years particularly, we were more than satisfied with the results stemming from our experience with the Rules fight and our continuing serious problems in the House. Every major vote was by a short margin. We lost a couple, amazingly not more than a couple of major roll calls, but we didn't win any by big margins, and it was a struggle every inch of the way. And when you do it as a statistic--and I've done it--the statistics of those first two years compared to the Eisenhower years were phenomenal. In fact, our first year was better than any year since Roosevelt.

There were things you did that your better judgment should have led you not to do. There was a stage in the Medicare struggle where we--it wasn't the congressional relations group--were determined to light a fire under Wilbur Mills, and you lit the fire by going to the public. And you had a vehicle because you had the senior citizen organizations and you were going to have these massive rallies in various major cities of the country. I believe Madison Square Garden was the first stop, and we had the rally. The rally made little or no impact but antagonized Wilbur Mills. Subsequent rallies were dropped. The fact of the matter is that you were not going to sway Wilbur Mills, a congressman from Arkansas in a locked-in congressional district, by publicly attacking him.

G: Sure. Were there other ways that you could reach members of Congress through their constituents?

O: Yes, there were. We always were trying to enlist a constituent approach to the members.

G: How did you do this?

O: Well, what we did--and this was over a period of time. In foreign aid, we tried to provide every member with information regarding its impact dollarwise in his district or state. We then took on the task of trying to do a backgrounder on each member of the House, because our focus was on the House battles, to a great extent. It wasn't directly in our office; we assigned it to departments. But what we wanted to know, in addition to his bio, was what organizations he belonged to, what were the sources of his campaign

support, what were his hobbies and social activities, what schools members of his family attended, where were they located, what were his basic interests, his religious affiliation. [We wanted] basic information that might lead us to individuals or groups in the district that he had particular involvement with to enlist their support and direct contact with the members.

It was a refinement, really, of what we tried to do in other areas. Its utilization was not awfully broad, but there were times when it was of some help. It was also part of the effort to get to know him, to know about him, and his relationship to his district. He often had labor affiliations and some labor unions were stronger supporters than others. Some labor unions had particular weight in his district. You would have the DNC urge the international union to contact local union reps. But while we and the departments and agencies were engaged, the facilities of the DNC were utilized on an arm's length basis.

But to get back to the statistical evaluation through the eight years; I recall finally in the Johnson years we sought items we didn't win to avoid batting 1000 per cent. We had to seek out something to give it a bit of balance or it would not be accepted by anyone. But that brings into play the art of the possible, the art of compromise. When the chips are down on a minimum wage bill not totally to your liking, [are you going to] say, "We're not pleased with it; we're not happy with it, it is not what we sought?" Or when Sam Rayburn asks, "What is your decision?" I'm not going to call the White House and call the President. The President early on--this was President Kennedy--had made my role clear to the Congress. Initially, some members would call him to engage in legislative discussions. He'd ask, "Have you talked to Larry O'Brien about this?" "Well, no, I haven't." "Well, you should talk to Larry." It didn't take long for them to recognize Larry O'Brien was not a messenger boy from the White House; he spoke for the President. Well, I did. If I used my head, I could speak for the President. But God help me if I spoke for the President and it turned out that I shouldn't have. So you made those judgments.

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O: I wouldn't think for a moment, at that time, that I would respond as I did and have the President say later, "Why would you have done that? That isn't what I wanted, and to hell with them." So I said, "Let's go," and we went and we lost by one vote the next day. We recouped most of it by the time it got through the Senate and conference.

But the point I want to make is this is the art of the possible, the art of compromise. Was this a half a loaf or more? I judged that day it was. What I didn't say when I said, "Let's go," was what I knew: "We'll be back for the other half of the loaf," and we were.

So when you review the statistics, what was our record in 1961? We submitted fifty-three proposals and thirty-three were enacted. The point is that it was a good record. That's fine, but I don't want to gild the lily. It was an imposing, impressive statistic. It

showed more action in terms of legislative enactment than had taken place for a long time, under the stress brought about by the loss of the twenty-one seats when Kennedy was elected president and the consequent problem of trying to unravel the southern Democrat-Republican coalition, which we succeeded in doing over the long haul.

But it isn't fair for O'Brien or anyone else to proclaim these statistics without postscripting that it does not mean that if thirty-three out of fifty-three proposals were enacted, they were enacted in toto. They weren't, I'm sure. In many instances, the ultimate enactment signed into law at a bill signing ceremony might not encompass all the elements of the President's request. But it did represent significant progress. So you put that into the equation. It isn't just the batting average. Let's evaluate the content.

That is the way the process works and that's the way it should be conducted, because all we could lay claim to, and not by public pro- pronouncements but internally, [is] that we had recognized that we had to build an invisible bridge over a chasm between the executive branch and the Hill. And it had to be accomplished, as again I repeat, simply in human terms, always recognizing the sensitivity of what we were engaged in and the potential for disaster. The bridging was one thing, but the violation of the constitutional separation of powers, even by remote accusation by one member of Congress, could destroy your effort. John McCormack, Sam Rayburn, Mike Mansfield, any one of those leaders, or indeed any whip in the House, or almost any member could proclaim that this was unacceptable, that it should stop immediately, and that the Congress should not allow itself to be encroached upon in any way by people from the White House moving into an area where they didn't belong. The door would have been closed.

That's what you were dealing with. And it took time to get to the point where no one would consider such action. And then there were days, I'll tell you, when that little item that's on--I don't think it was a little item, it was in a column, and I'll tell you, that caused me loss of sleep. I had to be concerned when a member might say, "Wait a minute, I'm a regional whip and I've got to talk to my leaders. This is just unseemly, this guy O'Brien and his people getting directly involved in our internal discussions and head counts." Now, if that had been picked up, we would have been out of business.

I guess never again will that be a matter of serious concern because I'm sure people would say, "That evolved in the Kennedy-Johnson era and became part of the system." [Some would reply], "Well, what are you talking about; I'm sure that's the way it always functioned." When I tried to determine how it functioned and I [was] told, well, Tommy the Cork would go up the Hill on his own when he felt like it or President Truman would call a member, and that was the extent of congressional relations, it was news to me. I never knew how it functioned. I had no background or experience in this area. I'd been on the Hill for two years as a young fellow, as an administrative assistant to a buddy of mine that was elected to Congress. "You managed my campaign," Foster Furcolo said to me. "I don't know anything about this House of Representatives. Why don't the two of us go down?" and I did for two years, and that was enough for me. I didn't have any interest in continuing. . . . So I came home and stayed home until Jack Kennedy

remembered that we had met on a few occasions and decided he'd try to re-enlist me in politics.

G: You mentioned at lunch that--you emphasized how much this consciousness was raised by that Rules Committee fight. Let me ask you to elaborate on that again.

O: Well, it's probably difficult to understand--I guess it's difficult for me in reflection--that a president-elect and a new administration would engage in all the activities inherent in moving to president--inauguration day, cabinet appointments, establishing [or] possibly contemplating relationships in the whole foreign policy area, to have a concept of a New Frontier program, that basically would be advocacy of the elements of a party platform--and not focus completely on day one, recognizing that the Rules Committee traditionally had been the bottleneck for all liberal proposals, had successfully for years blocked every movement of a liberal nature, had to be altered in some way somehow or you were not going to be in business. And [you] get with your designated congressional relations assistant to the first leadership breakfast, now that you are president, and for the first time recognize that this change in the Rules Committee, which you are aware of is not going to succeed. You are sitting there with a whole New Frontier program that's just gone down the drain and you can sit and twiddle your thumbs for at least two years.

And yet it didn't penetrate. Nobody had checked it. There had been no communication with the Speaker. There was no understanding of the Speaker's depression regarding the possibility of success. And people would say, "Well, how could you let that [happen]?" Sure, you had an inauguration and you went to the inaugural balls and named cabinet members and whatever else you were doing, but, for God's sake, why in that interim period wasn't a major effort mounted with the incoming Congress to ensure that there would be a change in the make-up of the Rules Committee?

First, I didn't even know about it, I guess. I'm sure I didn't, because I didn't pay any attention. I didn't contemplate ever dealing with the Congress. After I was designated as the fellow who was going to deal with the Congress I didn't devote one hour to planning it, even to the point of not getting around to going over to the White House and meeting a fine man that I was going to succeed in that role, who had opened the door by contacting me and saying he was available to me for whatever length of time that I desired, to be helpful in a nonpartisan manner, because I was taking over a role that he was familiar with. And yet you sat there at the leadership breakfast and it was sort of, "Oh, by the way, you will be enacting this Rules Committee change."

So the shock effect apparently was there, but it wasn't there immediately, or why did not the President of the United States say to the Speaker of the House of Representatives during the course of that discussion, before the breakfast terminated, "We must have a postponement of the vote." Obviously the penetration took a little more time than that. Then the desperation of the situation and the end result of this debacle penetrated to the point where you call the Speaker of the House and say, "You've got to come back down. I want to talk to you." And you have the talk, and Sam Rayburn, very

honestly, didn't think there was any real hope to enact that rules change. The postponement was the first request that the new President made of him and, of course, he'd acquiesce to it. That was a rather harmless request, to postpone it for a week, a few days. But I'm sure that Sam Rayburn left that Oval Office saying, "That poor guy's got a lot to learn, because a few days isn't going to make any difference."

G: Did you consider alternatives to enlarging the committee, possibly purging [William] Colmer?

O: Those were discussed somewhere along the route, maybe internally in the House. Who in the new administration was engaged in those discussions I don't know and never did. Because what we had that morning was the expansion of the committee, which differed from removal of the chairman, or reorganization of the committee--thoughts that I assume had been considered by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, the Dick Bollings and the others. But if they were communicating any of that to the President-elect or his representatives, I certainly was not privy to it and consequently, I was oblivious. I'll tell you right now, even twenty-five years later when I think of it, when I think of what losing would have meant, my gosh!

So you say, what were your reactions, what did you do? It was a scramble. I had nothing in place. The President now has this knowledge; he's gotten the postponement, and what do you do about it? So you have a few days before the lynching takes place. But how do you utilize the few days? And as I have described to you, I guess it just came to your mind to seek help wherever you might find it, and you learned a phrase that you probably never heard of in your life, or never paid any attention to, called head count. You learned that a head count is a dreary, difficult, tough process that you're going to be engaged in repeatedly over a number of years. There's nothing very glamorous about a head count.

G: Did you have to get these counts directly from the members, or could you get it from, let's say, their legislative aide?

O: Sometimes, depending on the legislative aide, you learned that some legislative aides could speak for their member just as the members learned that I could speak for the President. And sometimes many of those legislative aides could not speak for the member. There were occasions when you would get part of that count out of, for example, the AFL-CIO that had a real lock on some members. And if a commitment from Joe Smith was relayed to me or in the course of our meetings on the head counts, depending on who it was and who was giving me the message and who had made the contact and what conversation had ensued, it could be something that I would say, "Okay, let's go. Checkmark. Right."

I'll tell you this, in every head count we were engaged in we were as conservative as we could be. I've used this cliché till friends of mine get sick of hearing me, because I have a tendency to do it and I'm going to do it again. I'd rather be pleasantly surprised than grievously disappointed. It's just my nature. I'm not an optimist by nature; I'm a

pessimist by nature. I like to think I'm a realist by nature. That's really how I rationalize in my mind, that if you tell me we're going to win something, I'm going to tell you several reasons why I don't think we will. It's a protective mechanism, I guess.

The other aspect of this, too, the last thing I thought I would be involved in in the Kennedy Administration was the role that I finally had. It never entered my mind. I honestly think to this day it was in part Kennedy trying to envision how I could be helpful. I had an intimate acquaintance with him professionally, politically. It was probably not a bad idea that this little team stay reasonably intact; there were only three or four of us that had gone the distance and in whom he had total trust and confidence, and that's generally what happens with the White House staff. And then Kennedy is thinking, well, the Congress, that's an extremely significant element of what we're going to be engaged in, and O'Brien, politically, he's gotten along with people and he has wide acquaintances. I imagine that was in his thought process. Then the two of us, two geniuses, come up with "Well, we'll tie personnel in. Then we have the whole package and O'Brien runs the show." But if you were looking for a congressional relations guy, "O'Brien isn't suited for this." I think it was a matter of whatever was in Kennedy's thought process--on congressional relations, anyhow. I simply said, "Yes, well, sure, why not?" That's what it amounted to.

There's one other aspect of all of this and I've tried to stay focused on it. Now that I'm in what amounts to retirement, I've tried to adjust to retirement. I think I'm entitled to it. My friends and associates can't understand how I could even contemplate retirement while everybody else in the world seems to be able to contemplate theirs. I don't understand that myself.

But in any event, I had to compensate somehow, find a way to compensate, for basic limitations in my life. I am no great intellect. I think I'm an average guy with normal interests in family and in your country and what you have been taught to believe in. That is that every person is entitled to the fullest opportunity for education and progress in this country. There are certain basic fundamental commitments under our democracy. And that whether you are a precinct captain or a member of the school committee or the block committee or you're trying to erect a playground in your neighborhood for your kids, you've got to extend yourself beyond your personal ambitions and you've got to make a contribution. You owe it. It is a basic responsibility of citizenship in this great democracy. Both my parents were born in Ireland. They came here as immigrants. And my father would say to me, as much as he loved Ireland and was proud of being Irish, "Thank God that I was able to come here," and he appreciated every moment of it. And so did my mother, who worked hard as a young gal in Springfield.

So you say, okay, you're no hero, you're just another guy. But recognize your limitations. Don't just accept them and do nothing about them and not try to improve yourself. That isn't the point. The point is that in the competition of life, in the competition of the political arena and the competition of government, you have a role and you must fulfill that role to the best of your ability. And there's probably one thing you

can do that will bring you up a notch and make you more productive, and that is work harder and longer than the opposition, and if you do that, perhaps that's a compensating factor that makes the battle a little more equal. Maybe that opposition may be brighter, may be more innovative, creative, or whatever, but if you tackle the job and work harder and longer and have a total commitment, you're going to bring your level of performance up and you'll get into a fair competitive situation. That's what I've always believed.

So when this darn thing came along, heck, how would you ever wind up being in congressional relations? Indeed, how would you ever wind up being postmaster general? That isn't a career opportunity. How would you wind up being commissioner of a major professional sports league? Was that something that you contemplated? Of course not. These things happen because I guess the ebb and flow of life are beyond your control. You make no plans. My career plans--I suppose if all this hadn't happened at an early stage I would have wound up practicing law in my home town. And I'm not suggesting I wouldn't be happy and probably even happier than I have been, but that didn't happen. But are you going to say to President-elect Kennedy, "Hey, hold it a minute. I haven't the slightest idea about congressional relations"? God, there must be a million people out there that have an intimate knowledge of the Congress, how it works, how it functions, its history and all the rest. But no, what the hang, if that's what he wants me to do I'll do the best I can and learn it as rapidly as I can.

But the Rules [Committee] fight, as I told you, wound up not only in a victory, but somebody up there was on our side and particularly my side, because I'll tell you, months might have elapsed to accomplish what we reasonably accomplished in about thirty days.

G: Do you think that Rules fight had a similar impact on President Kennedy?

O: Yes.

G: Did that suddenly cause him to be much more interested in legislative--?

O: It startled, stunned him. Believe me, by the time the postponed vote came along, nobody had to tell us what impact that Rules decision would have on us. We had awakened. We had put away the tuxedos and all the rest and said, "Boy, oh, boy, it's the real world."

G: Let me ask you a little bit more about that Rules fight and see if I can jog your memory with some questions here. You did get a lot of Republican support.

O: Yes.

G: What was the key to that?

O: I think that for the most part if you--and I haven't done this in years, I did it then, but I believe it was twenty-two Republicans [who voted with us]. In each instance you could quite easily determine the motivation for support: it was their constituency. I'm not saying

they didn't have a higher level of motivation, but the reality was their constituency and they tried to reflect [it]. Even though they had an R next to their name, they were what we would call Republican moderates. God knows what they would be considered in the context of a Reagan Republican Party.

G: Here, I have a list of them.

O: Yes. Every one of these fellows, I'll bet. Yes.

G: Well, there's been some suggestion that Joe Martin was particularly helpful in getting Republican support.

O: He could have been; he really was trying to be helpful. But I'll tell you, there are two turnaround districts in Connecticut where for several elections people were in and out like a revolving door. Because, remember, they had the single-lever ballot in Connecticut. Boy, did that switch that delegation. That would go from five-one one way to five-one the other way every couple of years. So I can see that--[Charles] Mathias in Maryland we know. Mathias has been consistent through his whole career as a liberal. [Silvio] Conte, the same thing, western Massachusetts. [F. Bradford] Morse, the same thing in his district in Massachusetts. [William] Bates, I would put Bates with Martin. I remember these guys well. Conte is still there, and Conte and Morse were good friends of mine. It was like Javits as a Republican senator; he was a Republican because that was the opportunity he had to go to the House in the first place--take the Republican nomination. It was wide open there and he seized the opportunity.

[Thomas] Curtis I can't account for. [Chester] Merrow and [Perkins] Bass, again, very heavily contested districts in New England. New Jersey, [William] Cahill; he later became governor, and [Florence] Dwyer. I don't recall the districts of [Frank] Osmer and [George] Wallhauser, but Cahill and Dwyer, they again were in the category of Lindsay, Conte. Oh, Cahill, as I used to say to him at times, "Why aren't you a Democrat?" You'll see the others: [Seymour] Halpern, Lindsay, [Paul] Fino. Those are the three Republican votes from districts where they had lucked out and were holding the seats and they were in the same category as Javits was statewide.

Ayers of Ohio--knowing Bill Ayers, as I did, I can't account for him. [William] Scranton--very honestly, I thought Scranton was an outstanding legislator. He later became governor of Pennsylvania, and was a very classy fellow. Then he sought the Republican nomination for president and they weren't about to. . . . [Alvin] O'Konski was from a typical district. [James] Fulton and [Robert] Corbett, I'm not that familiar with them.

And I'm not knocking it; there's a Joe Martin influence in here, but overridingly, of the twenty-two I think we can select fourteen to fifteen of those votes that would be votes that probably on several other occasions supported [the administration]. I would think all of those supported minimum wage, for example. Each one of those fourteen or fifteen

would be supporting civil rights legislation.

- G: I'm going to ask you about some southern Democrats, too. Well, would you say that Rayburn worked with Martin more than you did?
- O: Yes. Now, during the course of those several days I don't recall any direct contact with Martin.
- G: What was Rayburn's role in the fight? What did he do?
- O: Well, I think you'll find it right here. You look at that Texas [delegation list]. Now, you look--[Olin] Teague, [John] Young--
- G: Well, [W. R.] Poage.
- O: --[Bob] Casey. You're talking about some real conservatives in there.
- G: Yes, that's right.
- O: Now, Brooks, [Frank] Ikard to some extent, Mahon, [Wright] Patman, Al Thomas, Thornberry, Jim Wright, I'd say it's half and half. Half of these fellows would feel that they had had enough of this coalition and they'd like to see it more equitable, and the others would be influenced by Rayburn.
- G: Do you think Rayburn called in a lot of chits across the board in the Congress to get this thing through?
- O: Yes. I neglected to mention that we kept Rayburn fully apprised of what our findings were, and the Speaker's office was kept almost hourly apprised of what our head counts were revealing. We would have a lot of communication. I initially did not know Rayburn intimately, but I must say that I was very intrigued with this man and, as the months rolled by, I formed a relationship that became pleasant and comfortable. And he gave a lot, you know, letting old Larry hang around.

As you know, Sam wasn't a fellow that did a lot of talking; he wasn't overly verbal. But from the time that he postponed the vote [until] the vote was taken, I have no doubt in my mind that he did everything he could to try to secure support. Because there again, Rayburn was not in the camp of the Rules Committee leadership. He wasn't a liberal in the sense that we northerners look at liberals. But by the same token, he was, despite his opposition to Lyndon Johnson [going] on the ticket in Los Angeles, a great respecter of the presidency. And [he] recognized that national leadership emanates from the presidency. So consequently I cannot document to you what Rayburn did on the Rules fight except I know that he was fully committed. At the leadership breakfast--there's no question, because I was there--Rayburn was distressed, but just felt it wasn't doable, that it wasn't going to happen.

- G: Sure. Was there an argument that maybe we ought to compromise and try to--?
- O: There wasn't any further compromise. Where were you going?
- G: Well, Smith had evidently made some offers to compromise--
- O: Oh, I know, but--
- G: --to clear some of the bills or. . . .
- O: Yes. It would have been a big mistake to ever get into this deal with Smith involving X bills. I think I probably would have accepted defeat before I'd do that. He was a courtly southern gentleman and all the rest but you're going to put your destiny in his hands? Not the President of the United States that I knew.
- G: How did Smith resist this administration push to change the nature of his committee from conservative to--?
- O: Well, what he did, his observable resistance--well, I don't know as it was particularly observable; that wasn't the nature of Smith. As I say, [he was a] courtly southern gentleman, always very correct, but an adversary. He was like Harry Byrd; there was no way that he could intellectually or emotionally accept our concept of what was best for this country. And it just wasn't in the cards. In fact, I think there was a uniqueness about Virginia anyway in the political context that extended beyond just the southern Democrat. You know, they were in a world of their own, as was evidenced by Harry Byrd in later years.

And yet in personal terms, it's just amazing, as I reflect. They were among the nicest people I knew down there, and I can remember flying with the President down to Harry Byrd's apple festival. We never missed an opportunity, even if the odds were a thousand to one against you; you might get somewhere, like the Halleck story. He couldn't be a nicer, more pleasant fellow, and his son [Harry Byrd, Jr.]--I saw him not many months ago; we had just a great reunion. I was very happy to see him and he seemed to feel the same way. So there wasn't any of this sniping, backbiting, meanness; at least overtly. It never occurred. I don't remember having a real mean argument with a member of Congress in eight years. But I must say--well, look at those with some of the same background, nevertheless, closer to Virginia than to liberal Massachusetts: Al Thomas, George Mahon, Carl Vinson. Carl Vinson became very supportive of President Kennedy. The walk in the Rose Garden was one aspect of their relationship. But Vinson, with his respect for the presidency, he stepped away from the B-70 fight.

You know what really happened--after the first year you could discern it. With Kennedy, he was a really unknown with these fellows. Now, he's an attractive, youngish guy, and they didn't have any dislike for him, but he was a breed of cat that they didn't

know. Like Carl Albert said to me one day, "I got to know this fellow and rapidly." Of course, he [Albert] was in the leadership. He said, "I got to love him. I'd do anything for him! Of course, I really didn't know him before he became president." And see, we can talk--and I guess I've talked inordinately about the organizational aspect of this and the team aspect, but let's not overlook what in the final analysis made it work and that is one man.

Like the observers; I remember Ted White particularly. It was one of the most interesting election campaigns in history. White reacted accordingly, and White was fulsome in his praise of the Kennedy people, the so-called Irish Mafia. But heck, does that amount to--I always said, "What's the number you put on it?" in terms of victory. The contribution to that victory, the result of it can be attributed, if you had to use a statistic, somewhere between 93 and 96 per cent, probably closer to 96 per cent, to the candidate. There might be 3 to 4 per cent in there that could be attributed to organizing and maximizing the potential. And the same applied in the White House, with Kennedy sitting there with the twenty-one seat loss and all that and a razor-thin margin of victory and no mandate of any kind. His coattails didn't mean a thing to anybody who was in the Congress; that hadn't helped them get there.

So it had to be his personality, his style, the way he handled himself. And I think that members, any number of them were impressed with Kennedy's reaction to the Bay of Pigs, and you can compare that to the reaction that Nixon had to Watergate. I mean, this is a man who had strong gut reactions--he had courage, he'd step out there, he had no hesitancy to admit failure, errors. And as these members got to know him, an affection for him grew. They liked him. And that's why I used to appeal to them on a personal basis: "He really needs you. Don't do this to him." I remember telling a congressman one day, early on, "Gosh, out there in that press gallery"--Clem Zablocki was the congressman, and it was one of those votes where it wasn't going to do Clem any political good and it might even cause a little political harm. McCormack talked to him and I was talking to him, and I remember the last thing I said when he was leaving McCormack's office to go back to the floor was, "Gee, Clem"--because he was an early-on supporter of Kennedy and I thought that was the kind of appeal you could make. We didn't talk about the substance of the legislation or anything else. I said, "Gee, out there up in that press gallery they have their pencils poised to give it to Jack. You can't--." I mean, listen, that would appeal to me.

- G: Sure. That's great. Let me ask you about some of the lobbyist groups, pro and con, on the Rules Committee fight. On the pro side you had the ADA, the AFL-CIO, the National Farmers Union. Did any of these groups that I've named perform an extraordinary role here? Were any of them particularly helpful?
- O: I can't specify the help, but they were helpful. I can be more specific about the AFL-CIO because Andy Biemiller's activity was more observable to me and we were sort of in tandem during this effort. The other activities might be less direct. But certainly the AFL-CIO had a real impact.

- G: Well, did organized labor have more machinery for involvement in this sort of legislation?
- O: Yes. Well, they do; it's the nature of their organization, a Washington-based organization, but Andy was a former member of Congress and a very hard-working, dedicated fellow that enjoyed widespread support on the Hill. He was well thought of and I found him consistently supportive on the subsequent fights--and there were many of them involving the AFL-CIO obviously--and he had a staff that was broader-based than the others. Of the lobbying groups, the AFL-CIO effort with Biemiller would probably have to be ranked as probably more effective than the others. I can't really document that but it would be my judgment.
- G: The newspapers indicated that LBJ did some lobbying as well. Do you recall what he--?
- O: I don't recall the specifics but there's no question about it. He shared our concern and recognized what the end result could be.
- G: What did Bob Kennedy do for the effort?
- O: He had a lot of contact with the AFL-CIO, with various labor officials--

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- O: --he traded on.
- G: You're talking about Stu Udall?
- O: Yes. Concentrated on some long-time friends he had as a member of the House. Really, Bobby would be a natural for us, "Come on, Bobby. Boy, we're in another battle. Here we go. We thought we had a little honeymoon here, and bang." With Stu, he'd be thought of, as we sat there and tried to figure this out, because he was one cabinet member who was a former member of the House. And in trying to get a breakdown of the House, you went to people that already had a close friendship and relationship with the President and were--well, two of the three of them were from parts of the country where they could be effective. Elliott and Jones--they could be talking to their southern colleagues and see if they could pick up a vote here and there.
- G: On this particular issue did you get any complaints about the lobbying?
- O: I think everything happened so fast, frankly, I don't recall any complaints. It would be pretty hard to complain because those of us involved hadn't even been to the Hill yet, and it was moving so rapidly and that vote was coming, so there wasn't an interim period where people could start criticizing.
- G: Okay. Here is--

- O: Let's hold that for a minute.
- G: You see the list of southern Democrats that supported this enlargement. As you look it over, there were what?--four from Alabama, none from Mississippi, quite a few from Kentucky, quite a few from Louisiana.
- O: Yes. Yes.
- G: Are there any names there that you recall a little personal arm-twisting?
- O: Yes, I talked to a lot of them personally, but whether you'd call it arm-twisting or not, I don't know, but any number of them. First of all, on the Alabama list you have Carl Elliot, right?
- G: Yes.
- O: Who was intimately involved, along with Jones. You see that one presidential call was nonproductive, to Cooley in North Carolina. Oren Harris of Arkansas, it must have been instinct with him. Not all of these, but just about every one of them were talked to individually by us as part of that several-day effort.
- G: How about Mills? How did you get Mills?
- O: I don't know. [Dante] Fascell, he's a little different, you know, Florida and that district; there'd be an inclination. He wouldn't have been part of the so-called coalition, anyway. Vinson was a stick-out because, see, Vinson had become intrigued with the Kennedy candidacy when we campaigned in the South, and he had appeared with Kennedy at a couple of major functions down there. And that's the nature of Vinson, a class fellow in every sense. On Kentucky, I knew them all. [Frank] Burke would be the most obvious supporter. The rest of them, I can't account for them other than their individual decisions on the basis of their personal views.

I'm not suggesting that we turned all these people around. Our guess was that if the vote had taken place in the first instance, we would have lost by seven to fifteen [votes]. The best we could hope for was by seven, so really what you're talking about in this whole effort is that we switched a dozen people. And so, consequently, a good number of these people we're looking at now, these names are people that intended to vote in the first instance for the Rules change. Boggs, of course, was part of the leadership from Louisiana. Albert, part of the leadership from Oklahoma, and I'm sure [Ed] Edmondson would have supported us by the nature of his district. But with [Tom] Steed and [Victor] Wickersham I'm sure Albert accounted for that. Tennessee, well, [Ross] Bass might have been there. I think there's a combination in here and Texas. The most impressive part of this break-out is that it brought a third of the so-called southern Democrats to us, which we had to have. It was almost a third, as I recall. And a good

portion of Texas would be Rayburn and Johnson--because that's a darn good vote for a rules change out of the Texas delegation. You turned [?] one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen.

G: You've mentioned that Elliott was intimately involved in this. How do you mean?

O: Well, he had been one who agreed to sit for hours with us from the outset in evaluating each member of the House. That was a session I had over in the Mayflower Hotel and Elliott was supportive from the outset. He had been very strongly supportive of Kennedy in the election campaign. So Elliott and Jones, as I recall it, and Topper Thompson--Frank Thompson from New Jersey--were fellows that had had a direct involvement in the campaign. Elliott and Jones were southern. I guess our judgment probably was these were three fellows that would be hopefully willing to sit down and go over every Democrat in the House of Representatives, giving us an evaluation of what we could anticipate or what their pluses or minuses were in terms of our program. So that kind of detailed evaluation that took place was a clear indication that these fellows, Elliott, Jones particularly, Thompson obviously, would be most supportive.

G: The lobbying against the enlargement, the NMA, the National Association of Manufacturers, real estate boards, and the chamber of commerce, anything extraordinary here about their lobbying?

O: No. Frankly--we're talking about six days, I guess, from the time of awakening--I'm sure that I knew [but] I have no recollection of paying any attention whatsoever to what they were doing. Because first of all, whatever they were doing, so be it, there wasn't much we could do about it. To counter any inroads they might be making was something that we didn't have the luxury of time and manpower to do. So our total thrust was in terms of garnering enough votes for passage. I would think that probably the opposition lobbying groups were in the same position as the key players on the Hill that were in opposition to change--that they shared Rayburn's view, or Rayburn shared their view, that this was going to be relatively close but it would go down to defeat. So perhaps that enforced, brief period of intensive lobbying on our part didn't make that much of an impact on the opposition. I really wonder whether they caught up with it or recognized that it was creating some change.

G: At the time of the vote did you think that you had the votes?

O: At the time of the vote my recollection is that we thought we would squeak by. Now, I probably would have said, "We'll settle for one; we may get two, we could get five." And I might have even said there's a shot at getting a majority of seven to ten. It landed about where we expected it would land. We felt that with the question marks up to the last minute we could have a ten-vote margin, but we also were not totally confident we were going to prevail. If we felt we could get up to a ten-vote margin and we wound up with five, obviously we thought we might lose by a couple. It could be that kind of a . . .

- G: Was there an awareness on your part of who would go on the committee once it was enlarged?
- O: I don't think we even got into that, because we had assurances that people would be on the committee that would be favorable to us and interested in our position. As it turned out, we had one fellow that went on the committee that became very difficult in another struggle at a later date.
- G: Was this [James] Delaney?
- O: Delaney, yes.
- G: What was Rayburn's reaction to the victory?
- O: He was, as his usual Rayburn style, low key, a little smile, a slight chuckle, pleased.
- G: Did he ever say anything to characterize what it meant to him or what it meant in terms of the Congress?
- O: No. No, I don't think we ever got into that.
- G: How about Kennedy? What was his reaction?
- O: Relief. A great sigh of relief.
- G: Really?
- O: Yes. And my best recollection of his comment [is], "Now we're in business."
- G: Is that right?
- O: Yes.
- G: Any other memorable reactions to it that you recall?
- O: Not that I can think of. I think the overriding reaction remains my initial reaction to learning about all this. (Laughter) I think probably while it was uphill after that, it in a sense was a little bit downhill. As far as my personal reaction, I didn't jump up and down with joy. I think my reaction was a melding of pleasure and relief.
- [Interruption]
- G: Let me ask you about the omnibus judgeship bill. We talked about this briefly in setting up the legislative agenda. This should be on the first page [of the outline of legislative issues] there. Do you have that?

- O: Oh, I see. Wait a minute. Yes.
- G: This was the opportunity to name almost sixty judges. Did you see this as a political advantage?
- O: Yes. We saw it as an advantage because we were anxious to adjust the courts, if we possibly could, to the fullest extent possible in terms of attitude and thrust. The additional judges would afford an early opportunity to bring to the bench people that would be--I hate to use the word because sometimes it isn't appropriately descriptive--conservative-liberal or people that have a point of view that would more closely approximate the President's point of view than those who were currently sitting, for the most part. It isn't something that is discernible in specifics; it's just something that would have an impact on what we accomplished in terms of interpretation and implementation. Therefore, the importance was there, the reality of being able to name a large number of new judges. It seemed to be eminently doable, frankly, because obviously many of the people voting for this increase would see in it some advantages for them down the road when the actual appointing process went into effect.
- G: Sure. Eisenhower had tried to [pass a similar bill].
- O: So it's the type of legislation that you have a feeling political reality, if nothing else, will dictate its enactment.
- G: Sure. This brings me to the question of the division of judicial appointments in Texas between Johnson and Yarborough. Were you privy to this or did you help negotiate or accommodate?
- O: I was privy to it certainly. I heard a lot from Ralph Yarborough concerning it. We had a number of discussions.
- G: What was Yarborough's position?
- O: Well, Yarborough's position was that we should adhere to tradition, and the input of a senator who would participate in confirmation was tradition. And it was hard for Ralph to quite conceive of the role of a vice president, if he incidentally happened to come from Texas, in this process. It was a very touchy situation. As you know, the Yarborough-Johnson sensitivity was something that existed right to the end, the end being Dallas, and I suppose beyond. But just to focus on that period, it had a lot to do with much of the planning for the Texas trip. Al Thomas was pre-eminent in that decision to visit Texas, but Ralph's position was certainly well known to us and repeatedly voiced by Ralph.
- G: He had been a Kennedy supporter before Los Angeles.

O: That's right. I wasn't in a decision-making role in terms of allocation, but I was dealing regularly with Ralph Yarborough, seeking his support, and trying, in my own way, to accommodate his sensitivities to the best of my ability to bring about some kind of equity. But I came to the end of that particular road in Fort Worth when I had the discussion with President Kennedy up in his room and found that the early [news] stories, the first day of the trip, had been headlined Yarborough-Johnson. I decided, with Kennedy's knowledge and acquiescence, to see if I could find Yarborough before the motorcade formed to go to the airport to go to Dallas. That's all part and parcel of my involvement in all of this. It went to the legislative program; it went to the patronage, it went to the perceived slights, from Yarborough's point of view, and perceived unfair handling of some of his problems, and that was all an ongoing situation.

I stepped outside the hotel door and he was there; he had come down early. So we talked and I told him that I recognized his affection for the President, his support of the President, his high regard for the President, all the rest, but what he wasn't recognizing was he was doing the President harm and would continue to harm the President during the course of this trip by his actions in not sharing the car with the Vice President. There were several buses of press, and the press were already aboard waiting for the principals to come down and form the motorcade. And I said to Ralph, "You just look at those buses and you're the story. There's no way you'd want it, I wouldn't think. And that's grossly unfair to the President." Yarborough didn't say too much, kind of mulled it over in his mind, and he said, "Well, fine, I'll get in the car." That was about it, and just within a moment, the Vice President came out and I quickly stepped over to him to advise him that Yarborough would be riding with him.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to that?

O: He nodded, but I don't think he said anything.

G: I wonder if he was surprised.

O: I don't know. You had to get this done quickly and, of course, what happened as a result of all that is that when I got off the plane at Dallas and the Vice President and the President were working the fence, handshaking, Ralph sort of standing there, I did not go to my designated car. I hung back to be sure that I saw the two of them back in the car, the Vice President and Yarborough, for the trip into Dallas. But then again, I guess, with my approach to things, I wanted to see it with my own eyes and hope that nothing might have occurred in the intervening half-hour that had changed it. And they got in the car and then I had to hasten and jump into a car that was handy, one of the open cars, and that car contained three or four, maybe five--it was crowded--members of the Texas delegation.

G: Oh, congressmen?

O: Yes.

G: Who did make the decision about the division of those judgeships?

O: I don't know.

G: Was it Kennedy?

O: I don't know. I don't know how it was worked out.

G: Was there ever any consideration of letting Yarborough name all of them?

O: I'm not aware of that either. I don't recall--and it's pretty vague in my recollection--that there was a feeling on the part of the Vice President that he was prepared to accept that kind of a solution, to let Yarborough name them all. I think that Lyndon Johnson hung in there somewhat through this, and I know this much, that the President was very anxious to accommodate the Vice President while recognizing the really inherent historic rights that the Senator had. It was a tough one.

But as to the ultimate resolution, I was not involved, I don't believe, or I would recall it. I was involved with Yarborough from time to time on other patronage. I don't even remember the details; it might even have gotten to postal patronage, you know. He was very alert to what he felt were his rights. You did have a man on the one hand that was a staunch early supporter and a United States senator. On the other hand, you had a fellow that had agreed to go on the ticket and made one significant contribution to victory. Somehow, somewhere, you had to reconcile all that and come up with some kind of a solution that might have both sides kind of reluctant regarding the conclusion, but nevertheless, even if it was with reluctance, accept it.

But overall, the omnibus judgeship bill was not a matter of over-riding, desperate lobbying in a priority sense. There was a strong feeling from the outset that this would work itself out as it did.

G: Okay, you've talked about the foreign aid bill at some length, and you did write about that in your book [*No Final Victories*].

O: I think it's worth adding a postscript--because Otto Passman was a chore. He aggravated the President no end. He aggravated the leadership no end. John McCormack would become totally exercised regarding Otto. He was elusive in terms of pinning him down. There were a number of occasions when we thought we had formalized an agreement and found that Otto didn't recognize that to be the case. He was emotionally involved to a high degree. He was downright impossible. I don't think there was a more difficult exercise in my years in the White House than the exercise that took place regarding foreign aid and Passman. He was no different with President Kennedy than he had been with his predecessor. And I'm trying to recall, and I can't, a meeting we had on this subject where there was bipartisan attendance over in the White House in the living

quarters when we were trying to work this out. I can't recall a Republican leader present at that time that made the comment, perhaps it was Senator Dirksen, but the comment was made that he recalled vividly being at similar meetings with Eisenhower regarding Passman and that he drove Eisenhower completely up the wall to the point where Eisenhower had told the Republican leaders that he never wanted to see Passman's face again. He said he just drove him crazy, just exactly what he was doing with Kennedy.

So it wasn't a matter of selecting Kennedy out for any reason. It was the terrible misfortune to have a man, by virtue of seniority, in control of legislation that he detested and who felt that his role was not to organize the legislation and resolve any problems attendant to it. Somehow his role was to kill it all if he possibly could someday, and that made for a very, very difficult situation. If you asked me to select one member of Congress, House or Senate, that caused the President and the White House the most difficulty, interestingly enough I'd have to designate a democrat--I think small "d"--named Passman.

G: How did you deal with him?

O: I don't know as I ever did. I had a lot of contact with him but I never felt that I was dealing with him. I guess it's like anything else. When I first became acquainted with him I anticipated being able to deal with him, and as time went on he wore me out, too. He was impossible. There was a bright moment with a Charlie Halleck, and there were other things that happened, and you never, as I've said repeatedly, foreclosed a possibility, but with this man it was just an intensive, almost bitter struggle to the end. It just complicated our lives, because he accused us of all kinds of activity to exert pressure on him. I don't know whether he construed us to be a bunch of devils incarnate or just the horrible enemy or what. As for John McCormack, who was in many ways a living saint and who somehow could find good in everyone, the worst thing I ever heard him say was, "I hold him in minimum high regard." Passman just drove him up the wall, too.

G: (Laughter) Was there any pressure that you could apply in other respects?

O: None. None. He was in a world of his own. Why a man who had that view regarding foreign aid wouldn't at some point say, "I don't belong here in this discussion and debate and I can better serve my constituents in some other area." But I think that he would never contemplate that because he really, truly felt that he was driving nails into the foreign aid coffin and someday he'd secure the lid.

G: Did Passman have a counterpart in the Senate that was troublesome?

O: No, I don't recall, no. See, there were two areas that you had to confront on a regular basis. Foreign aid was one. There wasn't really anybody that I know in the House that was voting for foreign aid because he really was enamored with it. It was well understood by all, including your loyal supporters, that foreign aid was a burden, that nothing was to be gained by way of constituent support or political support out of supporting foreign aid.

What everybody had to weigh was to what degree it was adverse to their political interests. That didn't mean there weren't a lot of members that didn't recognize its validity and the necessity. But it was a burden.

The other burden was the debt ceiling. And the debt ceiling is where the opposition party would have a lot of fun with you. The only thought you had through that miserable exercise was that sooner or later there had to be an increase; they couldn't avoid it. But no one wanted to vote to increase the debt ceiling, and my guess is that roll calls would reveal that we may have been close to zero on Republican support for a debt ceiling increase. But those were the two areas that had built-in problems and you had to work on those two necessary legislative actions, recognizing that there was no real constituency.

G: In foreign aid President Kennedy did introduce the concept of a multi-year approach to it, and this was criticized as back-door spending.

O: Yes.

G: How did you deal with this issue?

O: Well, actually our motivation was obvious. Was there some way you could avoid this battle regularly? It started all over again about a week after you took a breath, it seemed. That's the way it was and it was awfully frustrating, so you felt at least you could take a shot at maybe trying to avoid an annual fiasco. That was our motivation and our approach. (Laughter)

G: On issues like this, did you ever ask for more than you thought you could get, thinking that they were going to cut something?

O: Sure, within reason, but you'd always go on the up side because you just anticipated that at best you would be in an area of dollar compromise ultimately anyway.

G: The creation of AID was that year, too, and again you had the multi-year funding question.

O: Yes. Well, actually, multi-year funding you approached as sort of what have we got to lose and, who knows, maybe you might luck out, at least in part, because it was the route to travel anyway. It made sense. But that didn't mean that it was persuasive.

G: There was a very close vote in the Senate on that AID measure, an amendment by Styles Bridges to prohibit any military aid to any countries that traded with communist countries.

O: That's right.

G: And you defeated that by a two-vote margin in the Senate. Do you remember that vote?

O: I don't remember the specifics of it, but Bridges really put in a major effort on that. He really did. He fought for that vigorously. I don't recall Bridges during that time being so totally involved in anything comparable to the effort that he expended there. He really made it very difficult.

G: Did you sense the China lobby at work here?

O: Yes. Because he pulled out all the stops that he was capable of pulling out. The record shows that he came awfully, awfully close to achieving his goal. I don't recall whether we anticipated it to the degree that it unfolded at the outset. Maybe we did, but I doubt it, because it became so intense it was surprising to us, as was the close vote.

It's funny, when you mention Bridges and ask for recollections of someone, and this is no personal reflection on Bridges, but the one area of Bridges' activity that immediately comes to the forefront is this very exercise. I don't recall anything else particularly. While Bridges was obviously not a supporter, I don't recall him playing important or decisive roles in opposition. I mean, I don't think that he had that much weight in the Senate. But in this instance, he had, as it turned out, a very appealing argument.

G: Well, he must have died shortly thereafter. I mean, he died during this period.

O: Yes.

G: Okay, you talked about Saund of California and the closing of the VA hospital there on AID. Passman evidently made a point of criticizing the administration lobbying on that measure, and even cited that LBJ had brought in Ayub Khan from Pakistan to give pep talks. Was this the case?

O: I don't recall that it was the case at all, but I must say, anything that came to Passman's mind, I'll tell you, he articulated it. Passman could envision that the entire administration had dropped everything that it was engaged in and its sole effort was to defeat Passman. You could have suggested anything to Otto Passman and he would be a believer, saying, "They're doing this, that, or the other thing." I mean short of--

G: He said Shriver visited every congressional office on the Hill.

O: He's right.

G: Shriver did? Why Shriver, because of the Peace Corps?

O: Yes. And Sarge Shriver applied to this effort every fiber of his being. I had become acquainted with Sarge way back in 1952. At that time he worked for Joseph Kennedy in the Merchandise Mart, and he was on leave to us in the Massachusetts Senate campaign. And I recall very well that he was a man of inordinate drive and capacity for work. He

had a high degree of enthusiasm for whatever he was engaged in. And I will say this, that Sarge was as effective an administration official on the Hill as anyone I can think of. He was indefatigable. As you see, I'm a great admirer of his, because not only did he do that on the Hill, which I personally observed and was involved in, but every assignment that he's had. I've also noted that through his private sector life, he's applied the same effort. He and his wife have done just an outstanding job of organizing and directing the Special Olympics. It is one of the best programs for the disadvantaged that's ever been created, to the degree that I made a point, as commissioner of the NBA, to ensure that a major portion of our public service announcements that we had available to us on national television were devoted to the Special Olympics, along with contributions that players and coaches and others in the NBA made over the years.

I wanted to say all that because Sarge Shriver to me in a lot of ways epitomizes what is termed a dedicated public servant. It was brought into focus in this effort, and that wasn't the only time Sarge tramped through the corridors up there.

G: I'm sure we'll get to a lot of his help later when we get to the poverty program and other things, but in addition to this foreign aid measure this year, can you recall any other lobbying that he did?

O: Well, on the whole Peace Corps obviously. I think a great deal of the success is due to Shriver and the reaction to him on the part of the members up there. There would be any number of occasions when I would be chatting with a member and he would reflect on his contacts with Sarge and how impressed he was with him. I think that, you know, if you could have had twenty-five Sarge Shriver's around, life would have been probably a lot more comfortable.

G: Did both Presidents Johnson and Kennedy recognize this talent?

O: Yes. Very much so. I think that President Johnson had his difficult moments trying to evaluate the various members of the Kennedy family, but with Sarge he saw early on a fellow that was outstanding. He held him in high regard.

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G: --purged from the subcommittee.

O: In the first place, as far as the White House was concerned, we weren't in the business of issuing threats or encouraging purges. If, indeed, we would ever contemplate something like that, the last fellow that we would involve ourselves with in that regard would be Otto Passman, because it would have given him great joy; his martyr complex would have been further spotlighted, and he would have had great pleasure in making public pronouncements in this area forever.

So, no, Otto Passman was, as I said, a very unusual guy. He was unique; he was

not well regarded among his colleagues. He was considered a bit of an off-beat character. He had this foreign aid hang-up and he had a great deal of control over foreign aid legislation. I have no knowledge that Passman was a contributing factor in any meaningful sense in any other area in the Congress.

G: Did LBJ ever have any formula for dealing with him, or did he--?

O: Not that I recall. I don't think there was a person in Washington who had a formula. Obviously the Republican administration had tried, and if he could aggravate Ike Eisenhower no end, then similarly aggravate his successor no end, and aggravate his own party's leadership in the House no end, I think that was it. There wasn't any formula to deal with Otto Passman.

G: Okay. You mentioned the Peace Corps. Let me ask you briefly, apparently there was a little opposition to the Peace Corps, is that right?

O: Yes.

G: Where did the title come from, do you know?

O: No, I don't. There was little opposition. It fitted in terms of the launching of the administration, the pronouncements of the new President, his aspirations and goals, and interestingly enough, it cut across the spectrum on the Hill. Members were early on, up front, intrigued with it. Which, incidentally, I must say was surprising to me. I don't remember specific members who expressed support for the Peace Corps, but I do recall that I was very much surprised with some of the early support and the sources from which it came. But I think you would again have to make reference to Sarge. I think that the reaction to Sarge personally was a very significant factor.

G: How did Shriver end up with that assignment, do you recall?

O: No, I don't. I don't [know] what conversations might have taken place within the family. I think that his reactions would be extremely positive in an area such as that. Re the members of the family--Steve Smith was in Washington for a while. I believe he had an assignment in the Defense Department, and there might have been another assignment. But I recall a conversation with Steve; Steve just didn't feel comfortable in Washington, in the administration. It wasn't his bent, and Steve really was anxious to go back to New York and the Kennedy Foundation. I remember having dinner with Steve one night, just the two of us. Our wives were on vacation. And you know, Steve is a very able fellow. But it was of interest to me that as he had a brother-in-law who was president of the United States, Steve could have carved out a career that would be meaningful in his brother-in-law's administration, but that didn't fit with him.

G: Well, there still have been suggestions that Shriver was an outsider for the family, though, because he was an in-law rather than a--do you think there's an element of truth in that?

O: Well, the family, that's--we could spend several hours on the family, because obviously I had ample opportunity over many years to closely observe the family, and that's a story in itself. But I think when you're talking about in-laws, male or female, you have to remember the Kennedy family is a very closely-knit family with a very strong-willed father who had views that he had no hesitancy to express. I think it was a natural evolvement that if you married into the family, you were expected to become part of the family's way of life, whether it was touch football or whatever.

So in that sense you're an outsider, and you accommodate yourself to the family, and you become a full participant in the Kennedy family life, which was a very active life among all of them. They're all active in sports and all that sort of thing. I think Sarge would come by that naturally anyway, because he was an excellent tennis player--I shouldn't say was, I assume he still is. And Steve Smith was athletically inclined, had a great interest in sports, so the fit is there.

I think where I saw resistance to being encircled by the family was with Jackie. And I can remember occasions sitting on the porch at the compound in Hyannis with Jackie, with touch football going on, male-female participation to the fullest, and other physical activities, and Jackie felt very relaxed not participating. I would be a nonparticipant and sit with her. And Jackie had an independence of her own in terms of what her interests were. She did not drop all her interests and assume all the interests of the Kennedy group.

So you can get into a lot of discussion; that's why to say Sarge was an outsider, I don't accept. I think that that was a marriage, he and Eunice, that couldn't have been more perfect. You know, there aren't many almost perfect marriages. I remember at their wedding over at the Waldorf, while Sarge was an employee of her father, they had mutual interests from the outset in the Special Olympics and in other activities they have engaged in together. They are both very religious and, you know, it was just a darned good fit.

G: You didn't see, then, any kind of cleavage between Shriver as an in-law and the Kennedy brothers as natural siblings?

O: That became a matter of public discussion at the time that Sarge was selected as a candidate for vice president by George McGovern, and inasmuch as I was one of the two or three, whatever it was, being considered by McGovern to take over the role of Tom Eagleton, I had a very close look at all of that. And there was a lot of talk about how the Kennedys would feel about Sarge seeking public office as a candidate for vice president. I never found that there was any concern on the part of the Kennedys. But that was when a lot of people suggested that perhaps the Kennedys feel that only Kennedys seek public office; that if you're not a Kennedy, even though you're a member of the family, that's probably not appropriate. But I never saw any evidence of that.

And Sarge did what he always does: as a candidate for vice president he never

stopped running for vice president. He just devoted every waking minute for months to that effort. I don't know, it's hard for me to listen to all the stories, because some of these stories are repeated and repeated until they become, supposedly, factual. And I've often sat and thought, well, that isn't the way I saw it. And I felt on many of these occasions that I was in a position where I could view it, and that isn't the way it was. But that's the way media portrayed it and so be it.

End of Tape 5 of 5 and Interview I